

## Summary Minutes

WFCR Advisory Committee  
February 22, 2006

Five Colleges, Inc.  
Amherst, MA  
3:30-5:30 PM

The meeting convened at 3:40 and was called to order by Jim Miller. Attending were Martin Miller, Sharon Fross, Karen Smith-Emerson, Sara Lawrence, Lorna Peterson and Jim Miller. Dan Velleman, representing Amherst College, was welcomed. Bill Israel and Rosio Alvarez are on sabbatical leave this term. Patricia Wright was unable, at the last moment, to attend.

The minutes from the November 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting were accepted with emendations.

Sharon reported on the quest for a new home for the station, providing some background about the original Rocky Hill Road site offered by the Chancellor, concerns about rising construction costs and a greater total cost than originally conceived, the worry that building costs might take away from programming needs, etc.

Sharon then explained that the owner of a building behind J.C. Penney had proposed leasing it for station use, which might be less costly than constructing a new structure. Various offices of the University have met to examine this possibility. In order to speed up the process, it may be that the Friends of WFCR, Inc. could execute the lease. Legal counsel is being consulted about this.

The group agreed that the building's location is nearly ideal, both accessible to the community and in relation to the Five Colleges. The overall size is about 10,000 – 15,000 square feet, and there may be room in half the building to create a second floor. Martin observed that the construction plans had called for 11,000 square feet, which would be the useable space yielded by 15,000 square feet.

The desire for instructional and studio space for the station, Martin said, might be met by an unused television studio in the basement of Herter Hall at UMass. Martin mentioned the possibility of moving WMUA, the university student station, there as well. WFCR's administrative and fund raising offices would remain in Hampshire House.

Martin discussed some of the financing aspects of a move to the leased building, noting that the station had done some projections through FY2018. Martin reminded us that UMass had given the station a reprieve from full cost overhead charges which translate into about \$130,000/year for the station. This new offer includes the possibility of the station's buying the building. The owner has given a nine month period at \$2000/month that will allow WFCR to carry out due diligence on the building and another 18 months at \$2000/month to permit an active fund raising period (there is none going on at the moment). The owner has offered the Friends first option to purchase the building. A lease to purchase option is being explored; the lease would run for 20 years.

Martin estimated that the goal of the first phase of fund raising to renovate the building would be about \$3.5 million. A second phase could then begin to raise \$2 million more for a programming fund. The original campaign announced a total goal of \$5.5 million for the building only. Lorna noted that over a five year period the station could expect about \$350,000 from the colleges. Sara suggested that design work could begin with the first million.

Sharon observed, regarding the location of the building, that there is a PVTA bus stop next to J.C. Penney's and that Continuing Education, University Without Walls and UMass Extension are all located nearby, off-campus. Because there is a total of four acres of land, the possibility of leasing park-and-ride space to generate station revenue was raised.

If there is a downside to this plan, it may be that it will take about 3 years before the station could actually move to the new site.

The station would need to connect to the University computer network and to its transmission tower on Mt. Lincoln. There is a possibility that a 75-foot tower would need to be constructed at the building to make these connections. Where there is fiber optic along the bike path or will otherwise be available by the time of move-in will be investigated. Martin said there would be a need for a 10-foot satellite dish as well.

Martin then distributed various articles about satellite radio, HD radio and commercial industry investments – all amounting to increased competition in an uncertain radio environment. Lorna asked whether the consortium that buys institutional products at a discount might supply the station with HD radios for promotional purposes. Responding to Karen, Martin explained that the station's HD signal would cover a smaller area than its total broadcast footprint. Three – four channels with CD quality will be possible, with the main signal being both analogue and digital. Each new channel would cost about \$50,000.

Martin reported that the owner of WPNI is considering selling the station, and had had inquiries, including from WAMC. Discussions continue with WTCC about sharing airtime, but Sharon said their interest lies more in using the station for academic purposes.

Contracts have been let for the North Adams and Great Barrington repeaters, and they will be the first on the air. Contracts for the Lee, Pittsfield and Williams College sites are still being worked out.

Martin reported that overall the radio audience is declining. However, WFCR remains among the top 30 noncommercial stations nationally. Last fall's weekly audience was the station's largest ever; the two-year average grew from 146,000 to 156,000.

The station's Program Director Michael Rathke left at the end of January. His duties have been split among John Montanari, Richard Malawista and Martin. A consultant will be hired for both on-air and producing duties to help with fund raising (there is no Director of Development currently – Martin and Fran Goodwin are covering those responsibilities). Martin is aware of a candidate with appropriate experience in fund raising and broadcasting. This general situation is expected to reduce costs for FY'06.

The annual Five College report and memo and WFCR's Annual Report have been mailed for the 14 March meeting to the Five College Directors.

Jill Kaufman, the station's news director, was introduced. She joined the station in May, 2005. She reported that Susan Kaplan is leaving. A fulltime reporter position would be hired for spot and feature news work. Charlene Scott will do more spot news and continue with arts features. A new slot during All Things Considered will be filled with local interviews by Bob Paquette and Kari Njiiri, who will split his work with 30 hours per week in news and 10 hours in music programming.

Jill reviewed some recent local stories and series produced by the news department. She described the staff as including two fulltime hosts who do some reporting, two fulltime reporters, a half-time reporter in Hartford and one report per day from Boston. Martin said that there is a total of 6 FTE in news. Jill commented the department tries to be globally minded, reporting local news with connections to larger issues and events.

Dan pointed out that visitors to the station website, those looking for pod casts, can be tracked.

There was a discussion about the coverage of news relevant to the Five Colleges. Jill reported that there is a quite a bit, and that the increase in local news would undoubtedly make for more. She mentioned the possibility of her attending the monthly meeting of the colleges' PR officers.

Martin extended an invitation to join him at the end of April in Washington or at the end of July in New Orleans for public radio conferences. Martin observed threats in Congress to cut public broadcasting funding, and their implications for the station's budget.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30.