

MCPB General Manager's Report for March 2014

John Coate March 2014

Finances

As the numbers below demonstrate, we are in a strong position relative to past years. A good pledge drive in February and then in May and we will stay on track. We expect about \$42K from the CPB in March. Then we will receive nothing from them until November. As, as mentioned before, the CPB changed the way they calculate their grant and changed their criteria to reward stations with a listenership of sizable ethnic diversity. As a result we will receive less from them next fiscal year – perhaps \$40K or more. We won't know the amount until later this year. Without question though, our FY2015 budget will reflect this hard reality. It is important that we avoid overspending, now that we are in a better financial position, or we risk falling right back into the red. After struggling to get ourselves straightened out, this would be a huge mistake. We must proceed with caution, ever mindful of the fact that we can so easily fall behind with just one or two bad months.

The following shows our “vital signs” summary of our finances. This time we compare how we did last year with this year. As you can see, although we have not earned as much income, our expenses are down, our receivables are higher and our debts are much lower. Thus, our bottom line is slightly better this year (so far).

	AS OF JANUARY 31, 2014		AS OF JANUARY 31, 2013	
	THIS FISCAL		LAST FISCAL YEAR	
	YEAR			
Total Income:	\$	356,430.15	\$	410,906.63
Income from donations:	\$	175,952.99	\$	202,510.95
Expenses:	\$	288,738.32	\$	303,303.44
Net Gain/Loss:	\$	67,691.83	\$	107,603.19
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Total Accounts Payable	\$	45,155.82	\$	71,497.98
Accounts payable from prior years	\$	26,044.44	\$	36,531.20
Accounts payable current year	\$	19,111.38	\$	34,966.78
Line of Credit Balance (Payable)	\$	0.00	\$	0.00
Accounts receivable (pledges & underwriting)	\$	40,191.20	\$	31,791.29
Available line of credit	\$	75,000.00	\$	75,000.00
Checking account balance	\$	56,330.60	\$	23,186.77

License renewal

The KZYZ license has already been renewed. The KZYX license has been held up because the FCC received a few letters complaining about programming and various management practices. Letters received by the FCC become part of the public record and we have seen the ones listed by the FCC.

The complaints are from one Board member, acting alone, who advocates that I be fired as a condition of license renewal. Other letters are from someone who identifies as a friend of his and from several people friendly with the “Members for Change” group. Our lawyers in DC advise that the contents of these letters do not contain items that would cause the license to be revoked, but the complaints trigger a process that slows everything down. And it costs us money. At the time of this writing we have spent \$803 in legal fees related to these letters and the effort that motivated them. We expect that the KZYX license will be renewed.

Board election

The 2014 Board election is underway. Voting will be in March, ballot counting in early April.

Development and Membership

Our first winter pledge drive is a day away from finishing at the time of this writing. Preliminary results show that we have so far received \$49K in pledges at the end of the drive on Saturday. More will come in through the mail and we will likely end up with approximately \$50K.

Our next pledge drive – our usual 9 day spring drive – will move from April to May 10-18.

We had strong end-of-year donations in December, receiving \$15.7K.

Operations

In January we finished installing our new main control console in the Philo studio. More than just a mixing board with on/off and volume levels, it is also an audio processor that improves the fidelity compared to our previous console. It turned out to be more difficult to install than anticipated (and more expensive too – total cost was \$16K) because of the studio building and its many layers of old wiring as well as the rather antiquated way that the old console had been set up. This Philo studio has seen a lot of gear come and go in the past 20+ years and it seems that whenever something new was put in, the old wires were left in place. It was hard to figure out what the right wires were, and then many of them had to be replaced. Rich and our consultant did more than one all-nighter working it out. But it is in, and it is working. And KZYX sounds better for it. The new console has enough differences with the old console that we do have to train each programmer in its workings.

We are well aware that listeners have been experiencing short “dropouts” where the signal goes out for a short half second or so. We are also aware that on 91.5 there have also been periods of what you could call “digital artifacts” where the sound distorts in a peculiar way. These are likely to be two separate issues. Problems like this are difficult to troubleshoot. There are a few possible causes. It could be faulty equipment. If it is one or more parts of the equipment chain, we can’t easily swap a backup into service because we don’t have backups for every component. It could be that the growing trees that interfere with the line-of-sight between the Philo studio and the tower on Cold Springs Mountain have increased that interference. And it could be radio equipment from other sources broadcasting at frequencies close to the STL frequency that bleed over and interfere. Any one of these problems present difficult (and probably expensive) challenges. Or it could be something else. I wish I had more hard information for you at this time, but we have to do more investigation.

Our studio B - we call it our “production studio” – continues to be upgraded and repaired so it can do double duty as a recording facility and backup live studio. We have done some rewiring on this front as well so that if Studio A has any kind of failure – and even new gear can go down – we now can just push a couple of buttons on our FM processor then go into Studio B and get right back on

the air. In the past we used to have to string a bunch of cables along the floor in an ad hoc fashion to accomplish it.

In early February in the wee hours of a Saturday morning the 91.5 signal went down because a key component of the KZYZ transmitter, the “exciter,” failed. Fortunately, last summer, we had purchased a backup exciter, knowing they could be prone to failure. So, because we had one on hand, 91.5 was off the air for about 24 hours. If we didn’t have that backup, we could have been off the air for a week or even ten days. The manufacturers don’t keep these parts sitting on the shelf all ready to go. You have to order them and they then custom build them. Again hats off to Rich for staying with this until KZYZ came back on the air. And we should all take this as proof that all parts of the broadcast equipment chain need backups that are ready to install when something fails.

We now have a new Events Calendar at kzyx.org, which replaces our old PSA system. The advantages are many: easier to enter your event and much easier to find events because it works as a true calendar with a number of search options.

We have acquired and installed our delay system that will increase our protection against broadcasting words not allowed by the FCC. We are still testing it and getting the hang of using it. Soon we will put it into service.

Programming

At the end of December, Paul Lambert “retired” from reporting news on KZYZ. We replaced him with a new team of Michael Kisslinger and Sheri Quinn, who, like Paul, are independent contractors. And we increased the news time to ten minutes. Sheri brings more than twelve years experience producing and reporting radio news and public affairs. Michael is a well known long-term resident of Ukiah who also hosts Give and Take on Thursday mornings, alternating with Mendo Matters, which Paul Lambert continues to host.

Program hosts who are on hiatus:

Sherry Glaser-Love – Our House Tuesdays 2-4 PM

DJ Ackshawn – New Slang Saturdays 1-3 PM

New and Returning Programs:

DJ Selector J – Sweet Smoke Weds 10-midnight

Dr. Richard Miller returns in April with Mind Body health and Politics Tuesdays 9 AM

Joel Cohen returned to Music without Borders Tuesdays at 10 AM

DJ Ryano now substitutes for Diane Hering Saturdays 1-3 PM as Songs in the Key of Twang

Open Lines will return in April with multiple hosts.

Looking Ahead

Provided we have the money, here are things we need to do and things we hope to do.

- As described above, we need to re-arrange the signal to originate in Ukiah with the first link to Laughlin Ridge north of Redwood Valley. We are running a race against time because of the rapidly growing trees on Signal Ridge west of Philo which threaten to interrupt our 91.5 transmission. At the same time we hope to set up a Ukiah studio to better accommodate inland programmers and guests. These two objectives are intrinsically linked.

- Move the AV studio to Boonville, closer to the phone building. To be modern and able to change with the times, we must stay close to the broadband data infrastructure just as much as we need a reliable terrestrial signal.
- Continue to acquire equipment that increases redundancies throughout the chain of technology necessary for broadcast. As stated above, we have this situation right now with the signal “dropout” problem.
- We want to put a booster or translator on Cow Mt to strengthen the signal to Lake County. Lake County is our best growth opportunity. We could also put a booster on the south coast so we can better reach Gualala and Sea Ranch.
- Increase the local news. As we have the money, we will gather and report more local news.
- Buy the BBC again. Maybe even Prairie Home Companion. This is expensive programming. It is worth it, but we can only do it if we can *consistently* pay for it.
- Better training for programmers. With 108 volunteer programmers, there is a range of radio skills in the group. There are good trainers out there and our product will be better when we pay for quality training.