

WGDR POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL
MINUTES OF MEETING FOR JULY 1, 2009
(AS APPROVED AT THE MEETING OF JULY 29, 2009)

Minutes of July 1, 2009 meeting of the WGDR Policy Advisory Council, with addenda: Comments on volunteerism as recorded at the meeting.

Present for the meeting, which began at 6:30 p.m. in the station lobby at the Pratt Center, were Thomas Weiss, Padma Meier, Beth Champagne, Rick Davis, Renée Carpenter, Bill Carlotti, Tonio Epstein and David Ferland, WGDR operations manager.

David spoke from 6:40 to just after 7:00 p.m. He stressed the importance of PAC attention to the development of policies for volunteers at the station, and to answering questions like what the role of a programmer is at WGDR, how long an absence is permitted a programmer, and how programmers find subs for their programs. He said that Christine Ferron, volunteer coordinator, and Alex Thayer, programmer, are interested in working on these. Christine and Greg Hooker, station manager, are interested in writing up draft policies, David added.

David also addressed the question of WGDR's live streaming of its program. He advised that WGDR should retain its free-format style of programming by allowing the option of switching on alternate programming when whatever s/he chose to play on a live program would not be in compliance with live streaming regulations. This, Thomas noted, was the same decision preferred by the majority of programmers who attended the general meeting and debated this question in May.

David noted that WGDR owns overnight playlist machines, as yet unused, that would permit the implementation of this dual-track programming option.

David also said that the Emergency Alert System machine is broken, although weekly tests are still taking place. Discussing the national weather service (an alternate source of weather reports), Renée proposed an ongoing training in using the NWS, and also proposed that monthly communication by management to staff be effected both by printed reports in volunteers' mailboxes, e-mails to volunteers and the posting of the month's report on the main bulletin board in the lobby.

After David's departure, the meeting considered making the development of volunteer policies its priority, then took up the question of whether Mark Shulman's plan to retire might lead Goddard College to put WGDR up for sale. The PAC accepted Renée's offer to speak with Schulman to sound him out on this.

Obtaining the password for the National Federation of Community Broadcasters from Greg Hooker, obtaining his response to questions on underwriting policies, and obtaining job descriptions for paid staff positions at WGDR were raised as priorities for the PAC, as well as the need for the PAC to have a voice with Goddard College in the running of WGDR, were all raised as PAC concerns.

Rick Davis advised that POSITIVITY might be the best policy for PAC members as they negotiate to sustain the traditions of free-format, all-volunteer programming at WGDR. Volunteerism and standards of conduct, he asserted, can coexist.

The meeting was adjourned at about 9 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Beth Champagne

P.S. A date for the next meeting was set, by consensus, after the end of the July 1 meeting. It is Wednesday, July 29, at 6:30 p.m.

Addenda: Transcription of comments on volunteerism as copied and posted at the meeting.

I. General observations from each PAC member present, in turn

Volunteerism is not effectively driven by fear, laws and punishments. It is about incentives and enthusiasm.

Top-down control by nagging and intrusive bombardment creates anger even when it comes from a nice person. Positive interpersonal relations, with communicative skills, would work.

Some programmers have had better experiences with specific directives around events and the fund-raiser. Someone must “direct,” and provide a focus for volunteer participation.

Community radio is a service. Its entire meaning is in democratic self-governance. All “should” be dedicated to serving the whole larger community. All must pull together, with the National Federation of Community Broadcasters as a source of “structure” (conventions defining the norm in community broadcasting) and resources to draw upon. A person who is knowledgeable, passionate and aware of the role of media in democratic self-government can help provide focus. Ultimately, the connection between people is what volunteerism is all about in community.

Volunteerism is the central concept at WGDR: People who are inspired to want to see the best of WGDR. Specific requests are necessary in order for people to know best how to help. Volunteers appreciate the opportunity to be here; consideration flows both ways. Positivity is infectious. (A wall between the PAC and management impedes functionality and wears down good spirit.) Volunteerism and standards can both exist.

Volunteerism starts with training, both the first time in the station, and ongoing training. Principles of volunteerism should be incorporated into the first series of trainings.

II. ON SUCCESSFUL VOLUNTEERISM

How will we know when our volunteerism is successful? What will success look like? How will we get there?

Answers:

When there are tangible tasks to be done, people feel comfortable volunteering. We need to match people, tasks, skills, and comfort zones.

All responsibilities of programmers are an important subject in volunteer training.

What is the status of programmers in the minds of paid staff at the station? Is it low?

Training is an initiation into the full responsibilities of volunteer programming.

PAC observes that Greg Hooker has not followed through on promises he’s made to PAC, for example to listen to programs of all volunteers and provide feedback (and a [respectful, supportive, cooperative] relationship).

Shall we write into the new training manual that the position of volunteer trainer should rotate?

WGDR can [and must] be such a joy to belong to that volunteers really want to be here, and will feel welcome.

III. ON ATTRIBUTES OF VOLUNTEER TRAINERS

This individual might support the concept that each new programmer must have a mentor or sponsor.

How do we decide who should be the trainer? Will the trainer be a programmer whose program/music/spirit the trainee likes?

IV. ON LEADERSHIP

Positive collaborations between the paid staff and volunteers should be collaborations between equals. Management must inspire initiative, develop clear lists of the station's needs, and support and develop mentorships between new and old programmers.

V. Summary/ Highlights

A. Mentorships

B. Inclusion of introduction to volunteering along with equipment training for new programmers.

C. Respect the value of new energy in inspiring new enthusiasm for WGDR radio. (Before the position Hebert fills was created, programmers were trained, on-air, by other programmers.)

D. Question: Is there hope for change at WGDR?