

Berkeley, May 5, 2012

On April 25, 2012, Pacifica Foundation Executive Director (ED) Arlen Engelhardt sent an email concerning the hiring of a general station manager at KPFA to KPFA Local Station Board (LSB) Chair Margy Wilkinson. The email is brief and one that KPFA listeners and staff members need to know the content of. I will quote it and then place the email in context.

*"After serious consideration, telephone interviews with all 3 final candidates for GM, and in-person interviews with my final 2 candidates, I have concluded that none of them is the right person to lead KPFA.*

*"I am committed to finding the right permanent general manager for KPFA. Perhaps there are one or more candidates that were not on the list that should be considered. Christine has a few resumes that have come in since the search was concluded or perhaps you need to re-open the search. Let me know how you want to proceed, and if there is anything I can do to assist at this time."*

*In Peace  
Arlene*

In mid-May, 2010, the LSB-elected Personnel Committee sent out notices to various media outlets, non-profits, and political organizations announcing that KPFA was seeking a general manager. Applications were slow coming in so we kept the hiring window open for several extra weeks. The Committee met several times over the summer to read and evaluate the 24 applications we had received.

When the job application date was finally closed, the Committee met to reconsider all the applications and to evaluate them in terms of the GM job description, as well as experience, background in public radio, etc. After many hours, we narrowed the pool to five applicants and set up interviews with each of them. LSB members gathered at KPFA to ask questions and evaluate the answers.

The first round in the interviews was held Dec. 10, and consisted of 15 questions that examined a wide range of subjects including experience,

working with unpaid staff, dealing with conflict, budget preparation, new technology and recruiting listeners. A second round held Jan. 18 2012, probed applicants' understanding of KPFA's traditions, issues of diversity, working with the Pacifica network, and gave the applicants an opportunity to ask questions of the LSB. At the Feb. 4 LSB meeting, the Board voted to pass three of the candidates on to the Pacifica Executive Director.

Under the bylaws, the job of the LSB is "To screen and select a pool of candidates for the position of the respective Station's General Manager, from which pool of selected candidates the Executive Director shall hire the station's General Manager."

In the Committee, and then the LSB's examination of candidates, we carefully followed the qualifications set out in the job description, and paid close attention to experience and background. But in her letter to the LSB Chair, the ED addresses none of these things. The huge number of hours that went into examining the applications draw up the questions and evaluate the answers is dismissed with "I have concluded none of them is the right person to lead KPFA."

Why? Are their qualifications wrong, and if so, how, given that the Committee and the Board examined all of these? "Right person" is an evaluation? How are the Committee and the Board to understand that? The suggestion that there were "one or more candidates that were not on the list" who should be considered is deeply puzzling. And how does the ED know there are such candidates, given that this was a process that by definition was addressed only in executive sessions? Does she have someone in mind that was not included? And by what criteria is that candidate superior to those recommended by the LSB?

To suggest that we examine late resumes undermines the whole hiring process and could even open KPFA to a lawsuit. If one declares a hiring period over, one cannot then arbitrarily re-open that process without making that fact public and allowing other candidates to apply late as well. As for re-launching the search: this hiring process took just short of 11 months to complete and the ED wants us to re-launch another?

The KPFA LSB has done its job. It has presented a pool of applicants that fulfill the qualifications laid out in the hiring process. The station desperately needs a General Manager, but the ED has chosen to ignore those wishes in order to continue with the current management, management that was hired without any consultation with the LSB. The ED has dismissed one of the LSB's more important jobs—the creation of a pool for the hiring of a station manager—in two paragraphs. This is simply not acceptable. It is not acceptable to ignore and dismiss the work of the Hiring Committee and the Board, and it is not acceptable to bypass the bylaws to maintain management that does not have the support of the LSB. KPFA is predicated on the right of local listeners and staff to run the local radio station. The listeners and staff elected a LSB to guard those rights. All of that has been eviscerated.

The KPFA Local Station Board demands that the Pacifica Executive Director choose a candidate from the pool presented to her and return control of KPFA to its staff and listeners.

Conn Hallinan  
Chair, KPFA LSB Hiring Committee