



CITY COUNCIL

Darryl Moore
Councilmember District 2

ACTION CALENDAR
December 14th, 2010

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Darryl Moore, District 2
Subject: Urging Pacifica to Reinstate KPFA's Morning Show

RECOMMENDATION

That the Berkeley City Council adopt a resolution calling for Pacifica to reinstate KPFA's Morning Show and send a letter to Arlene Engelhardt, Pacifica's Executive Director, and Pacifica's National Board.

BACKGROUND

While it is generally understood that KPFA and the whole Pacifica radio system are experiencing serious financial difficulties, and that it will have to make some difficult budgetary changes, it is unclear how cancelling the Morning Show would be financially advantageous to the organization. The Morning Show is KPFA's most successful program, both in terms of popularity and donation dollars. In the short amount of time that the show has been off the air, the station has already begun to lose listeners and contributions.

KPFA's Morning Show is a fixture of our public discourse and it is a critically important venue for our community's free exchange of thoughts and ideas. The City Council urges Pacifica management to reconsider its choice for the Morning Show to take the brunt of these cuts and to negotiate in good faith with the union to discuss financial alternatives to employee layoffs.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

Unknown

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Darryl Moore, District 2

510-981-7120

Attachments: Resolution
Sample Letter

RESOLUTION NO. ##,###-N.S.

Resolution Urging the Pacifica to Reinstate KPFA's Morning Show

WHEREAS, Pacifica Radio Station KPFA-FM in Berkeley is a cherished institution of Northern California's progressive community and is needed now, more than ever, for its independent voice and alternative viewpoints; and

WHEREAS, The Morning Show has served as an important civic forum for the San Francisco Bay Area, exploring issues that don't get aired in the mainstream media, it performed an essential service for Northern California's vibrant progressive community; and

WHEREAS, while KPFA and the whole Pacifica radio system are experiencing serious financial difficulties, it seems imprudent to cripple the station's most successful fundraising program, which generates more than three times in fundraising dollars than its cost, in the name of cost cutting; and

WHEREAS, listeners to KPFA have canceled their subscriptions and advised that they will withhold future support, endangering the financial stability of the radio station and the entire Pacifica Radio network; and

WHEREAS, certain steps taken by the Pacifica management seem to have violated both the spirit and the letter of the democratic constitution of Pacifica's unique experiment in listener-employee run radio; and

WHEREAS, the local board is charged with the task of reviewing and approving KPFA's budget in Pacifica's bylaws; and

WHEREAS, the local board approved a budget, drawn up by local management and unionized staff, that proposed a number of ways that costs could be cut without drastic layoffs and would have helped keep KPFA financially solvent in the long-term; and

WHEREAS, in violation of Pacifica's bylaws, the Pacifica board rejected the locally approved budget, without discussion, and went on to draw up and pass an alternative budget without showing it to the local board; and

WHEREAS, the heavy-handed manner in which the layoffs have been made has triggered a showdown with KPFA's staff union, CWA Local 9415, and has already resulted in an Unfair Labor Practices charge with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB); and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Berkeley urges Pacifica Radio management to rescind the layoffs, restore the KPFA Morning Show and negotiate good faith with the KPFA's union, CWA Local 9415, a solution that abides by the collective bargaining agreement and which is fair and acceptable to all sides.

December 14, 2010
Arlene Engelhardt, Executive Director
Pacifica Foundation
1925 Martin Luther King Jr. Way
Berkeley CA 94704

Dear Ms. Engelhardt:

We wish to express our deep concerns about way in which recent program changes were made at KPFA. We understand that KPFA and the whole Pacifica radio system are experiencing serious financial difficulties. However, it appears to us that certain steps taken by the Pacifica management violate both the spirit and the letter of the democratic constitution of Pacifica's unique experiment in listener-employee run radio.

The listeners, staff and the local management of KPFA were all caught by surprise by the precipitous layoffs of The Morning Show staff, the station's most popular locally-produced program. This show, hosted by Aimee Allison and Brian Edwards-Tiekert served as an important civic forum for the San Francisco Bay Area. By exploring issues that don't get aired in the mainstream media, the Morning Show performed an essential service for Northern California's vibrant progressive community.

We are also troubled by the way Pacifica has disregarded the authority of the local station board in budgetary matters. The local board is charged in Pacifica's own bylaws with the task of reviewing and approving KPFA's budget. The board had approved a budget drawn up by the local management and unionized staff that proposed a number of ways that costs could be cut without drastic layoffs. The Pacifica board rejected that budget without discussion with the local board, and went on, in clear violation of the bylaws, to draw up and pass an alternative budget without even showing it to the local board.

We do not believe this is the best way to move forward. The heavy-handed manner in which the layoffs have been made has triggered a showdown with KPFA's staff union, CWA Local 9415. It could result in costly lawsuits, turmoil, and deep dissension within a community whose positive energies are needed during these hard times.

There is another path. We call on you to respect the democratic will of KPFA's listeners and staff. Sit down with the union and local supporters of the station and negotiate a collective solution that will be fair and acceptable to all; cancel the layoffs and start over.

We have chosen to speak out about this dispute because of our desire to preserve this cherished institution of Northern California's progressive community. Now, more than ever, we need the independent voices and alternative viewpoints KPFA make available. We hope that Pacifica can hear this plea: that it will approach this problem not in a way that will sew division and acrimony, but that will instead bring credit to the community it represents.

Sincerely,

The Berkeley City Council

Cc Pacifica National Board
CWA Local 9415