

Rise and fall of a community radio station

Act One – The Beginning

If you are unaware of Coos Community Radio which operates at 98.1 FM, you aren't alone. Sadly, with the exception of Democracy Now and Economic Update, (both programs I brought to the station), and thanks to its current management Travis Hayer and Darlene Elliott, you also aren't missing anything.

In 2013 the FCC opened a window for the single largest expansion

of community radio stations in the history of the agency.

Non-profit or publicly owned organizations were invited to apply without fee for a low-power FM (LPFM) radio license. After

some encouragement from a fellow activist operating a full power station in

Florence, I applied for three licenses in Coos County.

Happily, all three

applications were approved and received what is called a "construction permit".

Each had a maximum of three years to build and begin operating a station. Winter

Lakes High School in Coquille, Bandon Community Radio and Coos Community Radio in

Coos Bay/North Bend all went live and received their full-fledged broadcast

licenses.



Now a little LPFM station may not seem like a big deal but keep in mind that [KBOO](#) which now has multiple translators operating at a combined 28000W covering the entire northern half of Oregon offering diverse national and local programming beyond began life as a 30W LPFM. [KJAJ](#), on the other hand is still looping 24 hours of programming first aired three years ago via Windows Media Player seven days a week, let its domain expire on June 3, 2019, is apparently delinquent filing required state and federal reports and is refusing to repay me more than \$4K forcing me sue the station which will likely force it into bankruptcy.

KJAJ began broadcasting in February 2017, mere days before the construction permit was set to expire. The path to licensing was a circuitous one and like all new organizations not without hiccups but could not have been accomplished without the help of my fellow founder Patricia Gouveia. The start of the construction period coincided with another project Pattie and I were involved in, the effort to establish a right to a sustainable energy future ordinance in Coos County. Pattie, in fact, did all the heavy lifting in the beginning for KJAJ while I focused on the campaign. She setup the bylaws, code of ethics, conflict of interest policy and paid the bills and much more. She also wrote and obtained two grants totaling \$11,700 to fund capital equipment purchases. Without Pattie, KJAJ would not exist.

Using her contacts from the time she worked at ORCCA, Pattie further secured a location for a station. Alternative Youth Activities, Inc offered an unused house on their property. This would facilitate one of our goals to work with youth which was a feature of one of the grants we submitted. Our only requirement was to cover the monthly electrical and water and allow AYA to use one room in the building. We were excited because this would allow us physical space to grow as the station became more involved with the community. We paid the utilities for about 20 months before we actually began broadcasting. In

addition to the grants, Pattie and I also provided in excess of \$4K to cover operational expenses to keep the station afloat until it was generating revenue.

Initially we planned to use a remote tower location but as time was running short and suitable towers were few and far between AYA's new executive director, Scott Cooper, agreed to allow us to erect a 36' tower on site. We considered this a temporary solution until a better tower location providing us with better coverage was found but happily KJAJ was borne and Coos Community Radio received its full-fledged broadcasting license.

As with many small organizations we struggled organizationally and please note that when I use the term "we" I mean the KJAJ board.

Board members and volunteers who have been there almost from the beginning include Knute Nemeth and Geno Landrum, (there were others in the early days who had to drop out for various personal reasons or because they moved, time constraints, etc).. Small start-up organizations require a working board meaning people willing to do the hard work of raising funds, filing state and federal documents and doing the day-to-day upkeep and maintenance, public outreach, etc...

At one point I invited Travis Hayer to be on the board

because he had actual experience operating a station having worked for Bi-Coastal Media and we eventually invited Scott Cooper to the board as I thought it would be reasonable to have a representative of our landlord and largest in-kind contributor, AYA. Scott Cooper also indicated he would help with grant writing taking some of the burden off of Pattie. These two choices would ultimately prove fatal to the organization.

In addition to the time constraints set by the FCC we were also under other time pressures. Our foundation grant of \$9,000 was meant to be spent within one year and to be used for capital expenditures, not for operating costs. Because we had so much difficulty solving the tower problem it took us nearly two years to spend it. We had planned to reapply for more funds but until we spent the first grant this would not have been appropriate and so we opted to make some purchases that we hoped would be useful to the station in an effort to meet the original deadline or **risk having to return the money**. This was freely discussed at a board meeting unfortunately, the only people who showed up were Pattie and me and Geno Landrum who at the time was a volunteer and not yet on the board. We bought some Barix boxes, a small FM transmitter, a microphone and some odds and ends knowing we could always sell these assets if necessary. Even then we still hadn't

spent enough money to justify reapplying and we were even more concerned because of the lack of input from the rest of the board. After Pattie and I held a yard sale, (mostly organized by Pattie), with no help from the rest of the board, Pattie decided she was done and understandably decided to resign.

This was a critical time for KJAJ because it still did not have its broadcast license and time was running out. At my request Pattie stayed on as the "paper" president temporarily while I took over the chores of president and treasurer and was added as a signor on the account. Included in the treasurer duties was tracing back over the previous three years to determine how the money was spent. The board was provided with the breakdown below. In summary, we raised \$11,700 in grant funds and by the time we went on the air had spent in excess of \$15,500 in verified capital purchases and operating expenses. As mentioned previously, the difference between what we received in grants and what the station spent, almost \$5,000 by the time I too gave up on KJAJ, came from Pattie and me.

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MRG	9000
Williams	2700

Total Grants	11700
TX 300	3295
tx 100	1695
Barix	715
Mic	79
EAS	2395
Tower	840
Cabling	149
MegaSeg	199
Engineering	547
Total	9914
Organization	
501 C3	850
Dept of Justice	320
1170	
Net Funds	616

Operating Expenses	
Utilities	2860
Insurance	950
Accounting/QB	408
Miscellaneous	219
Total	4437

Shortfall = \$3,821

Since I did not have a debit card for our bank, I used my own bank and credit cards to make the purchases or pay the utilities, etc. This

was made clear up front to the attending board and I further made it clear that I would reimburse myself for these purchases and expenses.

In addition to paying the bills and making the equipment purchases I prepared and filed the required state and federal reports and hosted the station website, KJAJ.org on my own server. All of this was because I firmly believed the station could be a valuable community asset to help counter the conservative commercial radio that permeates the area.

Pattie and I are deeply disappointed after all our hard work to see the state of the station now. What a waste of our time and effort. Stay tuned for Act Two to learn how Scott Cooper took power from the station without asking, (I was paying for it), how he decided to change the lease terms we had previously agreed upon and helped stack the board with AYA sycophants including Darlene Elliott and Octavia Shafer. Learn how he tried to publicly shame me in front of his friends and girlfriend for having had the audacity to privately disagree with him via email. Then read how KJAJ is trying to steal my money.