



Status Report

**Community Advisory Committee,
First Public Meeting, 5/22/04**

Prepared for July 29, 2004
AETC Board Meeting

About Atlanta Public Radio Initiative

The Atlanta Public Radio Initiative (APRI) is an organization of Atlanta area residents who are strong supporters of public radio but believe the programming schedule of WABE suffers from a lack of shows devoted to intelligent dialogue about national and international issues.

APRI is not urging WABE to eliminate its music programming and switch to an all-news/discussion format. However, we do believe the station would achieve a better programming balance if it were to add more NPR shows which feature informed discussion of matters such as education, the economy, the environment, technology, taxes, terrorism, and foreign policy.

APRI currently has approximately 500 members who have signed a petition agreeing with our goals.

Status Report for July 2004

Report on the First Public Input Meeting of the Community Advisory Committee

The first public input meeting of the Community Advisory Committee (CAC), was held at the station's headquarters on Saturday, May 22, 2004.

APRI's understanding is that CAC's purpose is to gather input from viewers/listeners as to the direction, including the programming mix, of public broadcasting in Atlanta. CAC is comprised of 12 people supposedly chosen to represent a broad spectrum of the Atlanta community. One of APRI's founders, Andy Altman, was asked to be a member.

Out of some 60 members of the public who attended, nearly two dozen were APRI members, and many others clearly shared our goals.

CAC's Chairman, AETC Board member Chuck Taylor, got the meeting off to a rocky start when he announced that the purpose of the meeting was *not* to air grievances about the programming schedule of FM 90 and specifically *not* to discuss the balance of music and news/discussion programming. He said that the station had been aware of the music/news issue long before APRI came into existence, and that, in effect, further comments on that score would serve no purpose.

There was immediate negative reaction from the audience, and an APRI member was the first to speak. She directly challenged Mr. Taylor's surprising assertion, and the audience was obviously in agreement – to the extent that Mr. Taylor backed down at once. The floor was then open for anyone who wanted to come to the front to speak on any topic.

The majority of the 30 - 40 people who spoke indeed expressed their strong desire to bring more NPR-type news and discussion programming into the mix at FM 90. There were three or four people who spoke in support of the current format. Nearly all speakers (even APRI supporters) mentioned that they appreciated classical music and did not want to see it disappear totally from the schedule.

A few people spoke of wanting more educational programming, as well as more in-depth coverage of what is happening locally. Several people mentioned bringing more diversity to the station. Some people talked of the possibility of having two stations – one for music, one for news. Two people said that having a programming director (Lois Reitzes) who was also the host of the station's premier classical music show (Second Cup, 9 a.m. - 3 p.m., Monday - Friday) was clearly a conflict of interest. Overall, the major thrust of the audience's comments was that there should be more talk/discussion programming during daytime hours.

A number of people expressed their disappointment in how CAC was functioning, specifically that eight committee members didn't bother to show up at the very first public input meeting ... that many of those on the committee were reportedly friends of program director/Second Cup host Reitzes ... that not one person from either WPBA or WABE management came to the meeting ... and that the meeting was not recorded (Mr. Taylor and the moderator scribbled notes while people spoke).

Of all the comments made, about 90% agreed with APRI's goal of wanting more discussion/news programming. The meeting ended with Mr. Taylor proposing to hold further public input sessions in several of the city's minority communities, the goal being to have Atlanta public broadcasting do a better job of achieving a more diversified audience.