

WFCR

Background on Recent Program Changes

Program Changes

WFCR's mission is to provide its listeners with diverse news, information, music and cultural programs of the highest quality available on radio. The station is committed to programming that entertains, educates and informs." Our listening audience includes over 150 communities that range from southern Vermont to northern Connecticut, from eastern New York State to Worcester County.

Today, WFCR is a multi-media organization operating: 88.5FM WFCR; 88.5FM WFCR HD2; 640AM WNNZ; 1430AM WPNI; and wfcf.org.

WFCR makes programming decisions based on our mission, our resources, benchmarking with public radio stations nationally, and various sources of listener information including: ratings data obtained through the Arbitron Company, listener e-mails, letters and phone calls, surveys, and fundraising trends.

We regret that WFCR is unable to continue producing *Valley Folk*. We know how deeply many people feel about its host, Susan Forbes Hansen, her program and the genre of folk music. We also regret that we must discontinue purchasing and airing the nationally syndicated shows, *Afropop* and *The Thistle and Shamrock*.

There are still many opportunities to hear folk music on the air. Listeners can hear Susan Forbes Hansen (former host of *Valley Folk*) weekly on WHUS, 91.7 FM in Storrs, Connecticut and online at www.whus.org On WFCR, folk music is often featured on twice-weekly broadcasts of *A Prairie Home Companion*. WFCR also offers five on-demand folk web streams from its sister station at UMass Boston, WUMB-FM. WUMB is now broadcasting its folk programming on WPNI 1430AM, Amherst. Northeast Public Radio, WAMC, 90.3 FM, airs folk music at several times in its broadcast schedule including weekly broadcasts of *Mountain Stage* and *The Hudson River Sampler*. Many folk music listeners may also enjoy the programming on a local commercial station, WRSI, The River, at 93.9 FM, and WMUA 91.1FM from the UMass Amherst campus.

Reasons for Changes

The principal reason for the changes implemented are budgetary, due to increased program fees from National Public Radio (NPR) and other national program providers, increased employee benefits charges from the State, and the prospect of reduced federal funding through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB). To meet these pressures, to achieve our strategic goals and continue to pursue our core mission, it became necessary to re-allocate resources.

Classical music, jazz and news are central parts of our programming and mission. Consistency is important because people listen to radio formats, by and large, and not to individual programs. The more a station programs by format, the more successful it is in reaching people, thus providing more listeners with a public service. Part of the rationale behind the recent changes is to make the programming we offer more consistent. Jazz can be heard six nights a week from 8-11 PM: *Jazz a la Mode* is aired Monday through Friday, and *Jazz Safari*, with its mix of jazz and Pan African music as well as music from the African

Diaspora, is aired on Saturday night, also from 8-11 PM. In the mix of music we broadcast and the formats we carry, WFCR plays diverse music from around the world.

WFCR is also committed to serving its audience by bringing diverse voices to the airwaves; we are searching to hire a bilingual (Spanish-English) reporter. We want to increase the station's ability to stay in touch with the region at large, and provide more reporting on emerging and established communities of all kinds. Additionally, we are continuing our long commitment to programming in Spanish by airing the locally-produced *Tertulia* as well as *Epicentro Politico* — a current affairs program produced in Washington with funding from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting — that focuses on news, analysis and political debate. *Tertulia's* 8 to 10 pm time slot on Sunday nights is when the overwhelming majority of its listeners tune into the program.

Community Input

WFCR's management is advised by two volunteer organizations; the WFCR Foundation, formerly known as the Friends of WFCR, and the WFCR Advisory Committee. The WFCR Foundation is composed of 17 members, is charged with providing financial support, reviewing WFCR's mission statement and strategic plans, providing advice and making recommendations to station management and its license holder *on all matters related to the overall operations and strategies of WFCR (including programming)* and providing the management of WFCR with information about the public's sense of the quality and effectiveness of WFCR. Its complete by-laws are posted at www.WFCR.org. The WFCR Advisory Committee is comprised of three community members and one representative from each of the Five Colleges. *This group advises the station manager on a variety of matters, including program changes.* The Committee has three regularly scheduled meetings annually which are posted at www.WFCR.org and are open to the public.

Both groups were informed about the program changes and the reasons for the changes; both groups endorsed the station's decisions and supported the station management and the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the station's license holder, in making those changes. Prior to making these decisions, discussions were held with both groups in the context of goals and objectives related to WFCR's strategic plan (that plan is, and has been, posted on www.WFCR.org for public review). In short, there has been advisory community input in these decisions, and that input has been and will continue to be important.

An Important Question

As a Town Meeting member, there is an important question for you to consider: Should a political body address the content or editorial decisions of any media outlet? The First Amendment protects the freedom and independence of the media, whether private or public.



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