

Pacifica is planning to establish "shadow" local advisory boards at every station

Transcript of excerpt from KPFA's Flashpoints, September 28, 2000, in which Tomas Moran, a Pacifica National Board member from the KPFA signal area, is interviewed by Flashpoints Executive Producer Dennis Bernstein.

DB: We now again have to turn our attention to the situation at Pacifica. And we're happy to be joined by Tomas Moran. He's a member of our national board and there were board meetings a week or two ago; and there was an emergency board meeting that was held via telephone yesterday. Tomas Moran was a part of that, and I understand there's some information, important information, regarding what's going on here at KPFA. Tomas Moran, welcome back to Flashpoints.

TM: Thank you, Dennis. Thank you for this opportunity. There was indeed a board meeting yesterday that was touted as a confidential board meeting for personnel matters. Turns out there were no such personnel matters discussed. There's a couple of quick items I want to let the listeners know: that was Mary Berry's last board meeting and she is off as of today. And David Acosta is apparently recovering still from some illness and will decide in a month if he is going to carry out his duties as elected board chair. And Ken Ford is the current acting board chair per the announcement there. Also, during that call, Rabbi Kriegel and Rob Robinson, who have recently filed suit against the board were dropped from the call after being informed that they could not participate in board decisions any longer. It was claimed that this was an attorney, our attorney at Pacifica had decided that. I was not provided any information and I'm very concerned that we took action that may withdraw some board members' rights from participation in discussions.

But the main topic yesterday, and I'm saddened that I am announcing this or talking about this decision of the board that was received on the very day that I received the ballot to vote on the local advisory board, candidates that I have been listening to with great interest. The board took a vote to appoint two board members--these are Micheal Palmer and Bertram Lee--to go around to each General Manager and start setting up what they call an "alternative" or a "second" local advisory board. This is a move to disempower the local advisory boards that have apparently now uniformly across the five affiliates leveled criticism on some of the behavior that the Pacifica Foundation has taken. And they decided in a very dramatic move yesterday, which was not announced, was not discussed at the board meeting a couple of weeks ago, and just thrown in as a "must do" in Mary Berry's last meeting.

So their plan is not to dissolve the current LAB's; they said they can have as many as they want. But they're going to go form a second, parallel LAB structure, with people that they find acceptable for that role. And I think it's crucial for the listeners that are listening to this, and like myself and my household, received today the ballots to vote, that we cast those ballots and make it abundantly clear that we understand who the appropriate representatives to the Local Advisory Board are.

Anybody that listens to these candidates as I have on the air would find it an insult that people are saying that these people that are interested in giving advice to Pacifica are "agitators," which is the characterization that was made by a couple of board members about the current members of all LAB's. And again, lumping everybody under the same umbrella of...whereas I think that the majority of the feedback that I've heard given by anybody as local

advisory members or not, has been very, very sensible and positive to the Pacifica Foundation.

DB: Now let me understand this and make sure I know exactly what you're trying to tell our listeners, 'cause it does really feel like a slap in the face to this noble, and really respectful process of attempting to elect, for the first time in the history of KPFA, a local board elected by listeners and people in the region, as a way of really counseling programmers and volunteers and people in this community participating, a real participation. So this feels like, if they appoint a local board that in terms of, say the local board's advisement of the national board will be undermined by this appointed board.

TM: Correct, Dennis. I think that it is very clear to anybody. I mean that fact that they're leaving untouched the other local advisory boards, including our local advisory board that is about to be elected, is just something that everybody can see through. What's obviously happening here is the creation of an alternative group of people that they feel that they could...that will tell them what they want to hear, essentially. And that the effect of the existing local advisory boards, here and in the other four signal areas, is going to basically go unacknowledged and unnoticed.

DB: And the two board members encharged with going around and meeting with the various managers to set up this alternative board, if you want to use that word "alternative" it takes on a new meaning, that's Micheal Palmer--he's now the chair of the board's finance committee--who wrote the email in which he talked extensively about the potential of selling both KPFA and/or BAI.

Tomas, are you...this is obviously a meeting that we were not privy to. Are you violating some privilege? Have you been told to be silent about this?

TM: Well, Dennis, I tried to ask that question during the board meeting yesterday. I tried to ask "What was it about this board meeting that would fall under one of the very narrow criteria that would permit the board meeting to be confidential?" But I couldn't because the style of the board meeting was that we dialed into this number and were informed that only Dr. Berry could talk; the rest of us had to talk by punching a button and waiting for her to call on us. I had a question pending for the last five minutes of the call which she did not call on me, even though I had punched in way early for being recognized. And [she] basically hung up and adjourned the board meeting before I could ask precisely this question. I then sent an email to Micheal Palmer, and copied Ken Ford, and said nothing in that board meeting was a matter of personel as we had been told that it was, and I have to report to the community of what is it that happened. And I got an email back just recently from Micheal urging me not to go up and talk to the community about this. I don't know under what basis. As a non-profit corporation, there's very few things that we can have under...behind closed doors. We can certainly have an emergency meeting and we can certainly have a meeting by phone,. But there's no reason why the matters on this call should remain confidential. It certainly is a slap on the face to the communities and I'm sure that if people here as well as in the other signal areas are going to be quite upset by this development.

DB: Alright. Well, we're out of time, Tomas Moran. I want to thank you for your tireless effort on behalf of KPFA and Pacifica. I know that you're working around the network now. We thank you for joining us again on

Flashpoints.

TM: Take Care.

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[transcribed by Kellia Ramares]

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