

**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
BROADCAST LOCALISM HEARING
RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA
MAY 26, 2004**

**STATEMENT OF
MAYNARD MEYER**

Localism in radio is not dead, but it is in dire need of resuscitation in many areas. Before I talk about what I believe went wrong and what can be done to restore some semblance of localism in the radio marketplace, let me tell you about my experiences in local radio.

I have been involved in the radio business in announcing, sales, engineering and management for about 36 years, all of my experience is in communities of 5,000 people or less. At the present time I am President, General Manager and co-owner of KLQP-FM, a 25-thousand watt commercial station located in Madison, Minnesota (population 1,767). A boyhood friend and I put the station on the air in 1983. We reach a potential audience of 30,000 people in a five-county area. Incidentally, we are on the air 24 hours a day with a staff of three full-time people, including my partner and myself. We have about 6 part-time people who do some weekend announcing and some sports play by play reporting.

If you listen to KLQP you'll hear 6 local newscasts daily, all of which include local obituaries. If you lose your dog, your cat or your car keys you can give us a call and we'll put it on the air for you in hopes of helping to find what you've lost. If you're having a bake sale, a bridal shower, or a meeting of your organization, we'll put it on the air for you. Once or twice a week you'll hear a broadcast of a local high school sporting event. If you've found something in your attic you'd like to buy or sell, you can put it on our "Rummage Report" program which airs three times daily on weekdays. If you're the local police chief or public health nurse and you have something important to say, just come on in and we'll get you on the air in short order. During the winter we air school closings and many other weather related announcements. If you listen on Sunday mornings you'll hear the live or pre-recorded broadcast of a worship service from three churches each week.

Every year we help the local Strengthening the Family organization raise funds by donating free air time for an on-the-air auction of merchandise and services donated by local merchants. Every year the local Kiwanis Club airs their own radio show for an entire afternoon during which they read the commercials they have sold, they also read the news and weather and pick the music that day. Last year we helped the local veteran's organizations raise several thousand dollars during an on-the-air "phone-a-thon" during which many of the vets appeared live on the radio and told stories of their experiences in the various wars and conflicts. That is just a small sampling of our efforts to help the people in our listening area.

That, ladies and gentlemen, is local radio as I believe local radio was meant to be when we were given the assignment years ago to serve the public interest. We run a completely accessible radio station which to many has become the "heart and soul" of the area when it comes to daily local radio service. We personally live in the communities we serve so we know the "issues", we work to address them in our programming and have been doing so for the past 21 years.

A few years ago, many stations operated this way, but much of that has changed for a variety of reasons. I think the beginning of the end of local broadcast service started in the 1980's when the Federal Communications Commission approved Docket 80-90 which reduced minimum mileage separation between stations and allowed for the creation of hundreds of new FM stations across the country. The intent of this action was to open up several new local radio markets and that was, in turn, supposed to increase the local service in many communities. This, in theory, was not a bad idea. However, the Commission also relaxed the rules regarding operation from within a station's actual city of license. As a result, many small communities were assigned frequencies, licenses were granted, but the residents of those communities are not aware of the fact that they have radio stations. On paper, Paynesville, Minnesota has a station but programming originates in St. Cloud, 30 miles away. Clear Lake, South Dakota supposedly has a station but all programming originates in Brookings, 34 miles away. I helped some local residents put a station on the air in Pelican Rapids, Minnesota a few years ago, it started with a studio in that community but has since been sold and all programming now originates from Detroit Lakes, 20 miles away. According to FCC records, Sunburg, Minnesota has a radio station, but everything originates from Willmar, 20 miles away. I don't think this is the best way to promote local radio service. From what I have seen through my personal experience, as soon as a hometown studio is closed and relocated, the local service is relocated as well. Some of my counterparts will argue that centralization of studio facilities allows for increased efficiency and the ability to provide better local service...I haven't seen it happen. It is generally centralization for the purpose of "saving a buck or two" with little of the savings being reinvested in improved local service.

I would like to see changes in the main studio rule, requiring at least some minimal program origination from the city of license. I think there should be a requirement for a physical presence in the form of an actual studio or office in the city of license and at least a minimal staff with predictable office hours.

The Commission believes that formalized procedures to ascertain community needs are unduly burdensome and unnecessary. I disagree. When we worked on the license application for KLQP-FM we were required to conduct an ascertainment of community needs by personally interviewing representatives of City Government, service organizations, youth groups, religious organizations and others. This was a very rewarding experience and allowed us to get a real understanding of the needs of those we would be serving. I'd like to see this type of ascertainment reinstated. It could, perhaps, replace the "Issues and Programs List" requirement and could be done at least every

couple of years and placed in a station's file. This way we could be sure that the licensee has actually set foot in the city of license. I'm not so sure that some licensees these days can even find that city, let alone know what its needs are!

And finally, the system of auctioning off frequencies to the highest bidder must come to an end. Since when did the applicant with the deepest pockets become the most suitable applicant for serving the public interest? If this system had been in place 21 years ago our station, KLQP-FM would not exist today because we would never have been able to compete monetarily. However, I have no doubt we were, and still are, the applicants best able to serve the public. Some form of comparative hearings should be restored.

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. I look forward to participating in future discussions on this topic.