

## WMPG 5 YEAR PLAN 2010 / Revised Version

(11/14/09)

Every 5 years WMPG's Board members and the 5 Year Plan Committee take stock of station's health, changes in contemporary technology, our relationship with both our listening community and our university sponsor, in order to prepare a new 5 Year Plan. That document is designed to help us determine our needs and the challenges we face ahead.

There has been one major development at the station which drives most of the changes in the new plan. WMPG's request for a power upgrade was approved by the FCC allowing us to boost our signal from 1100 to 4500 watts and broadcast from a higher tower which will effectively a) improve our signal to our existing community and (b) expand our broadcast area to much of Southern Maine reaching a much larger listening audience. With the FCC approval comes the challenge to raise the necessary funds for a new transmitter and tower hookup (approx. \$250,000) and to meet an FCC deadline to begin broadcasting by December 2011,

The committee met regularly, beginning in April 2009 and considered many of the challenges facing WMPG in the next five years. The Five Year Plan addresses those issues that the committee found to be of greatest importance to WMPG in the next five years. While some of the former issues outlined in the 2005 5 Year Plan remain relevant (Space, Organizational Structure, and University Relations) the 5 Year Committee identified that **MANAGING Growth** (broken into 3 subcategories, of Technology, Listenership, and Financial Development) was the most important issue facing WMPG in the next 5 Years.

Given the issue of WMPG's Growth, we found that managing financial development, technological development, and listenership development components were so interdependent that they ranked equally in importance, with financial development taking priority only because of the FCC's fixed deadline to purchase, install the new equipment, and begin broadcasting by Dec. 2011.

The committee has chosen a format for the plan that identifies the issues, states the applicable concerns, and makes suggestions pertaining to those concerns. The intent of the Committee is not to micromanage or to prescribe specific actions, but to provide suggestions for WMPG's management and Board of Directors to consider when addressing the concerns that have been identified throughout this process.

The Committee's primary goal has been to create a forward-looking plan which will insure the health and uniqueness of WMPG in a way consistent with the station's mission statement and culture, while adapting to changing conditions in broadcast radio technology and the unique

opportunity presented us by the FCC's approval of our application for a signal upgrade.

In formulating this document, we reviewed the work of the previous WMPG Five Year Plan Committee, which presented a completed Five Year Plan in 2005, and studied their recommendations. In keeping with WMPG bylaws, we begin by presenting a vision statement that defines our strategic priorities and goals for the 2005 WMPG Five Year Plan.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

*“WMPG strives to sustain creative, diverse programming, education outreach, and broadcasting excellence to the communities within and around the University of Southern Maine in an inclusive, non-discriminatory way.”*

### **The Six Most Important Issues Facing WMPG In the Next Five Years:**

- 1. MANAGING FINANCIAL GROWTH (the financial development necessary to fund our Power Upgrade and secure our new license while covering our existing operating costs)**
- 2. MANAGING TECHNOLOGICAL GROWTH (installing a new, more powerful transmitter and moving our antenna to a different, higher location)**
- 3. MANAGING LISTENER GROWTH (gaining a greater listenership as our signal reaches a larger geographical area and an audience projected to be as much as 4X larger)**
- 4. UNIVERSITY RELATIONS (nurturing and utilizing our relationship with the University of Southern Maine in a mutually beneficial way)**
- 5. SPACE (addressing WMPG's crowded physical plant and the need for room)**
- 6. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE (defining the roles and relationship of volunteers, paid staff, board and university governance in a time of growth while preserving WMPG's unique culture)**

## 1. FINANCIAL GROWTH

WMPG must conduct a major capital campaign to raise the \$250,000 necessary to purchase a new, more powerful transmitter and tower location by December 2010, in order to meet the FCC deadline to begin broadcasting by Dec. 2011.

To address this need, the director of Development has implemented a major capital campaign, based on grant applications, special on-air Power Up fundraising and promotional events, as well as a telephone call campaign to regular donors based on a successful, proven model used by other community radio stations.

WMPG must remain fiscally sound and maintain a capital account in order to cover new costs associated with the technological upgrade, as well as meet normal, preexisting station operating expenses.

As the station continues to grow, WMPG Development must keep pace through the acquisition and retention of underwriters and listener donors.

### CONCERNS

- WMPG's on-air pledge drives have declined over the past several years, consistent with overall broadcast industry trends. Given the present weak economic climate, launching a major fundraising campaign for the Power Up while struggling to meet our normal operating expenses will be difficult. How do we manage the extra financial burden while meeting regular operating costs and continue broadcasting throughout the Power Up.
- The responsibilities of the Development Director include all areas of development: fundraising, event planning, promotion, and marketing. The schedule of station events and publications takes away from the Development Director's ability to solicit underwriting and do grant writing. Given the enormous pressure to conduct a major fundraising campaign while soliciting underwriting for "normal" operational costs, and conducting special promotional events and marketing chores, the Director of Development may be overworked, overstretched, overwhelmed, and compromised by the seriously cramped work space.
- How do we conduct an on-air major fundraising campaign plus our regular twice yearly Begathons without giving our listeners and contributors a sense of "pledge fatigue"?
- How can we approach and find new underwriters in a greatly enlarged broadcast area? How can our Development Director cover so much geographical territory and still take care of other official duties?
- \* If our capital campaign falls short of raising the entire \$250K needed to purchase new equipment and get it up and running by the FCC deadline, what do we do? Do we return the funds raised? Do we have a plan B? How do we respond to the community?

## **SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD**

- An increase in Development staff should be a long-range consideration for WMPG. Many stations of a similar size employ a Development/ Events coordinator and an Underwriting Director. Travel to solicit underwriting from more remote locations is time intensive. As with other areas of WMPG staffing needs, an effort to more fully utilize USM internships and work/ study employees is suggested in the short-term.
- Ask for support in our Power Up campaign and donations of grant writing and underwriting expertise from the radio community.
- WMPG should consider employing its website as a portal for fundraising (soliciting donations and selling WMPG-related items).

## **2, TECHNOLOGICAL GROWTH**

With the FCC approval of the change to upgrade our 90.9 fm comes the challenge to raise the necessary funds for a new transmitter and tower hookup (approx. \$250,000) and to meet an FCC deadline to begin broadcasting by December 2011,

This upgrade will effectively:

- (a) improve our signal to our existing community and
- (b) expand our broadcast area to much of Southern Maine, thus reaching a much larger listening audience.

Also submitted was an application to place a 1kW repeater transmitter in Hallowell Maine and to rebroadcast our main signal at 88.1 fm. This will present an excellent signal in the Augusta and Lewiston region. This is an area where USM has a campus and a contingent of commuting students. This application is still pending as of 9/9/2009 and we have been told by our engineering firm that we may not be awarded this construction permit.

WMPG has had success broadcasting via the Internet. This includes our live streams and our robust archives. We began streaming on the net in 1998 and archiving in 2003. This technology has had substantially more growth than IBOC and will require more attention in the coming years. Currently we are streaming in-house and archiving via USM Computing Services. We have the ability to accommodate fifty listeners at one time. This is usually adequate but given the

growth of Internet radio we must be ready to invest money and man power into this technology. The potential growth from Internet delivery and other new technologies must be

As is often the case with technology, it is impossible to see even five years into the future. By 2000, the web became an integral piece of WMPG technology. Public interest and a variety of locally produced talk programs are now regularly archived on our website and available to the public for downloading. As of September 2009, WMPG adopted the Spinatron file sharing technology that allows listeners to access to their favorite program's play lists.

#### **CONCERNS:**

- The 2005 5 Year Plan expressed concern that quite a lot of WMPG's equipment is old and nearing the end of its life expectancy. A number of upgrades have occurred since then including the complete upgrade of the On-Air studio but we will need to do the same to the Production Studio. It is expected that even if we succeed in purchasing and hooking up a new transmitter at the new tower location, some of our older equipment that will be in use during the Power Up transition will need replacing or backup.
- WMPG has seen how important a web presence can be in the past five years. The time required to maintain that presence is significant and has become a daily aspect of WMPG operations. It would be advantageous if we were to have a webmaster or a plan to address the growing demand of this presence.
- WMPG must continue to make it a priority to stay at the forefront of broadcast technology and whenever possible to present the best radio signal to our listeners and the best equipment affordable for our programmers.

#### **SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD:**

- .It would be advisable that with the upgrade to a new transmitter and a more remote transmission tower, as well as maintaining regular broadcast during the conversion period, that WMPG considers hiring a Technical Director.
- WMPG should continue to improve our presence on the web as a tool for information, communication, and archiving. It is suggested that a webmaster internship position be created.
- WMPG should continue to offer ongoing training to volunteers in areas related to radio and sound recording and editing.
- WMPG should consider inviting wider community participation in the technological side of community radio.

## **2. GROWTH IN LISTENERSHIP & PROGRAMMING**

Following completion of the power upgrade, it is expected that WMPG's signal will reach a much wider geographical audience, estimated to be 4X our present listenership. This is expected to provide a much larger community than we already serve, as well as a larger potential base of contributors and underwriters.

WMPG's programming is mission-driven. The station is representative of our community and programming, by and large, is determined by the community members who volunteer. WMPG remains committed to offering programs of high quality and increasing the listening audience. The station shall continue to strive to reflect the diversity of the USM, Greater Portland, and the outlying communities it serves. WMPG must also continue to provide an outlet for all creative uses of radio, through live in-studio and live remote broadcasting as well as pre-produced features. WMPG will always broadcast with an emphasis on public service.

### **CONCERNS:**

- How do we welcome the larger and more geographical diverse audience into the WMPG community? How do we accomplish this while maintaining and not diluting our existing sense of community based in the greater Portland area?
  - Many within the USM community feel they are under-represented on air. In what ways could WMPG do more in the way of collaboration with USM and local area arts organizations?
  - How does the station currently feel to a traditional USM student who really does most of their connecting thru facebook? How do our events attract or deter them? How accessible is the station "culture" to traditional students?
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  - The listing of what we offer to USM students is easy, but the process of mentoring students, working with faculty, and insuring that a positive experience for students is be time-consuming. Presently, Student life staff is already promoting and working on these learning experiences connected to many areas of the university.
- \* How can we accommodate more on-airvolunteers from new areas receiving our more powerful signal when our fixed programming schedule is already full and there's a waiting list?
- There is still a lack of alternative local news coverage on WMPG, although this is being addressed by news department training sessions.
  - How do we continue to offer a nightly scene report of local musical events when our broadcast area becomes so much bigger?

### **SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD:**

- WMPG should consider providing ongoing opportunities for feedback on programming from the community, including web polling.
- WMPG should consider researching feasibility and capability for local, state, and regional news, and the development of a News and Public Affairs Director.
- WMPG should consider the feasibility and expense of reaching the Lewiston/ Auburn USM community through the 88.1 FM frequency if approved by the FCC.

#### **4, UNIVERSITY RELATIONS**

As is illustrated above, WMPG and USM are connected on many levels. Even so, throughout its thirty-plus-year history, WMPG has often operated at the fringes of the university community. As the station has grown and evolved, its identity as a “community” radio station has sometimes overshadowed its identity as USM’s radio station. In many respects, the university has allowed WMPG to remain independent in spirit.

WMPG’s enlarged broadcast area will promote the university on its non- Portland campuses, as well as act as an “ambassador” for the USM in outlying areas.

#### **CONCERNS:**

- How can WMPG make its presence more visible on campus?
- How do we conduct a major capital campaign for a signal expansion at the same time USM, our sponsor, is strapped for funds, having to lay off staff, cutting back on curriculum and other programs, and is conducting a capital campaign of their own?
- \* How can we ensure that if we raise this money to upgrade our signal, USM, our license holder, won’t seek to sell the license in order to pay for more core university programs?
- Neither WMPG nor the University utilize each other to the fullest extent possible. Both entities could reap significant rewards by nurturing and developing our association. Can WMPG redefine itself as part of a “learning community”?
- Further, the relationship between the WMPG Board and the University and the respective roles and responsibilities need to be examined.

#### **SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD:**

- It is suggested that WMPG and USM develop and market learning experiences at WMPG beyond classroom walls. USM and WMPG need to develop a marketing

plan for experiential learning experiences available at WMPG. WMPG should list what we have available and then ask USM to market it to students

- WMPG should continue promoting its identification with the university, through regular station IDs and promotional spots on-air as well as on all WMPG letterheads, banners, logos, and other printed media.
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- WMPG should continue to explore ways to maximize USM student, faculty, and staff involvement at the station.. Connecting it to their academic experience and almost making it a mandatory part of their college experience in a way - might be the best way to introduce students to WMPG and radio in general. The more we expand ways for USM students to be involved with the station thru DJ, work study, interns, etc. the stronger the relationship with USM will become.
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- \*
  - Hosting an open house for faculty and staff could be a good event , including strategic invitations to those faculty whose majors might connect with WMPG programming We should check out the EYE courses for fall, make a note of course curriculum that might connect and invite faculty and class to tour the station or offer assignments related to WMPG.
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  - WMPG should consider making a formal proposal to utilize the new Hannaford Community Education Center for community events, lectures, and concerts? The station would be wise to stress its ability to reach the community as an agent of USM.

## **5. SPACE**

Space (or our lack thereof) seems to be ongoing concern for WMPG. Nearly everyone involved with the station agrees that WMPG needs an improved, larger facility with room for growth . Any major improvement remains very unlikely given the university's current fiscal condition, and so, for now, SPACE as an issue, has been pushed back while we address our more pressing need to successfully complete the Power Upgrade.

WMPG operates with a smaller staff and on a smaller footprint than most comparable radio stations. The lack of space has limited our ability to fill our staffing needs and has inhibited our growth, particularly where news and public affairs are concerned.



## CONCERNS:

- Former USM President Richard Pattenaud's *Transforming USM* plan which included building a new student center on the Portland campus had to be abandoned due to lack of university funds and a weak national and state economy.
- Presently the station's on-air library is beyond capacity, the paid and volunteer staff work in cramped, uncomfortable and unproductive conditions, The production and training rooms are oversubscribed and inadequate for the ever growing WMPG community. Lack of storage and security have become daily issues.

\*. USM will not be in the position to subsidize funding to address WMPG's lack of space. Should we succeed in our Power Up campaign, it may be necessary to add new staff positions (such as Development Staff support, Technical Dir., Webmaster, News Director, etc.) further exacerbating our space constraints. With increased listenership, more equipment, and the addition of more staff, where do we put them? Station growth will require greater attention from USM which is unlikely to have the resources in the short run. At present, during WMPG's fund raising campaign, USM has taken the attitude that "it will all work out". Is WMPG really ready to maintain status quo or even downsize if it does not work out? These are questions we need to ask ourselves because, as our license owner, USM is bound to raise them later..

- More function-specific, designated space is needed.
- , WMPG's identity is connected to its present "cozy, house on the corner" cramped quarters. A relocation elsewhere might meet some resistance within the community.

## SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD:

- WMPG should consider space needs as a long-term issue. Should the university's fiscal picture brighten, the first steps have been made, as management developed an initial report outlining WMPG's space needs ( 2005 5 Year Plan, appendix ii).
- WMPG should be prepared to consider short term measures that can alleviate the problem as much as possible. Our Music Director Ron Raymond's efforts to reorganize the music library are one good example of successful , low cost programs with immediate benefits.

While it is presently not under consideration,(and the Free Press needs to be consulted first),

WMPG could quietly suggest that since the Free Press doesn't need as much space as before since the digital revolution, we could use some or all of it.

## **7.ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

Since the station's earliest days, the University of Maine System has held WMPG's broadcast license, the University of Southern Maine has been home to the station, and a significant percentage of WMPG's operating budget has always been raised via USM's student activities fees. Until 2001, however, WMPG's paid staff (management, work-study students, and interns) were considered contracted employees of the USM Student Senate. Since 2001 however, all WMPG employees have become USM employees.

### **CONCERNS:**

- WMPG by its very nature has always existed as a semi-autonomous entity at USM. The fact that the station has always been a mix of community and college radio has left some in the USM community asking for a more formal commitment to placing USM students on air.
- The WMPG Board of Directors no longer controls the station's personnel issues and the responsibilities of the Board have not been fully examined since the changeover in WMPG employees' status at USM.

\* Since the Board of Directors is no longer in charge of reviewing the effectiveness of paid WMPG staff members who are now considered university employees, this job review process needs to take place through the Assistant dean of Student Life at regularly scheduled yearly intervals. Any immediate complaints or personal issues must also go through this channel as well. At the present time, this employee review has not been working in a timely fashion. and has become a matter of serious concern Presently, the reporting structure is not engaged as it should be. Given WMPG's semi-autonomous state, and recent university staff cutbacks, USM has relied on the station to work out its own personnel issues. The Dean of Student Life, Joe Austin, has not been able to conduct staff reviews in a regularly scheduled manner. Furthermore, our liason with the university, Dennis Gilbert, has been unable to regularly attend WMPG board meetings due to his time constraints.

- There have been instances when station volunteers and Board members are unaware of basic station policy. There is confusion among those affiliated with WMPG as to what the "Green Book" is and where the station policy manual and related materials are located.

### **SUGGESTIONS TO THE BOARD:**

- Defining the roles of the Board and USM supervision is important. WMPG is comprised of paid staff, volunteers, the Board, USM students, and listeners. It is suggested that WMPG revisit the roles, responsibilities, and accountability of each of these components and make the results available in writing to all station personnel in

order to make clear and understandable their rights and responsibilities and to reduce areas of potential friction and misunderstanding.

\*It is suggested that someone from the management team (probably our Station Manager, Jim Rand) attend USM staff meetings biweekly and really become a member of Student Life staff. Although it is certainly a time consuming task, it also might facilitate a stronger relationship with USM and keep WMPG's issues up on the radar screen. It would also help the Dean of Student Life, Joe Austin, to supervise WMPG more effectively, while at the same time allowing WMPG to still maintain its autonomy. Currently all of the Dean's direct reports, except Jim, attend staff meetings.

\*If it is possible or necessary for the WMPG Board needs to be more involved with performance management, perhaps student life rep Helen Gorgas Goulding can facilitate the process thru her role and initiate a process for that. She can help urge her boss, the Dean of Student Life, to finish the evaluation process in a timely manner and help him report back to the Board.

\*Are there other, more productive ways to utilize WMPG board's faculty rep, Dennis Gilbert's position to benefit all parties?

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- WMPG should undertake a comprehensive review and revision, where necessary, of the station manual and policies to acknowledge the change in employment status of the paid staff and address any procedural adjustments affected by the changes. WMPG is a USM entity and, as such, it must adhere to USM policies regarding personnel issues, grievance procedures, and the like.
- WMPG should better distribute the station manual and all materials related to station policy and governance or make these materials more easily accessible to WMPG staff. These materials and information should be clearly posted at the station.
- It is suggested that the WMPG Board of Directors study recent disputes at other community radio stations (WBAI, KPFA, and KXCI to name a few), particularly at a time of major change such as a Power Up campaign, and learn from them in order to avoid repeating their problems.

#### **FOLLOW-UP:**

It is suggested that annual reports related to organizational concerns be submitted to the Board from the Assistant to the Dean of Student Life, WMPG management, and volunteer staff representatives.

## **IN CONCLUSION**

The WMPG Five Year Plan Committee respectfully submits the 2010 WMPG Five Year Plan to the WMPG Board of Directors for review, discussion, and approval. Upon approval of the 2010 WMPG Five Year Plan, we request a full distribution of this document in hard copy form to all station volunteers and we request that it be made available to the community at-large via the WMPG website.

TJ McDermott

Garry Stevens

Isaac Shainblum

Jim Rand

Dave Bunker

Dale Robin Lockman

Dave Wade