

WJFF Radio Catskill Board of Trustees

Meeting Minutes

February 6, 2025 at 6:00pm

Meeting Location (Online meeting only)

Approved on: 3/10/2025

Board Members Present: Don Almquist, Jeff Barnes, Dale Blagrove, Amy Brightfield, Katie Childs, Barb Demarest, Gerard Finn, Jill Fruchter, Leif Johansen, Tanya Kalivas, Pete Madden, Ilya Marritz, Heather Quaintance, Krissy Smith, Sally Stuart

Board Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Mimi, Tim

Members of the public present: LJ Ruell

A quorum being present, Sally called the meeting to order at 6:02pm.

General overview: Sally opened the meeting talking about how the new presidential administration's policies may impact federal grants and WJFF. We face some threats but overall WJFF is in a good place. We've made tremendous progress on our strategic plan, have a potential media partnership, and are about to make two hires to expand our local news coverage on many platforms. Now is a great time to be locally-focused. Sally wrote a brief memo outlining our goals and priorities for the next six months. With all the potential challenges, it's good to clarify what we're trying to accomplish so we stay focused.

The next board meeting will be off site so we can brainstorm and begin work on a new SWOT analysis.

New CAB chairperson: LJ Ruell is the newly elected chair of the CAB. He joined last year. He's a Sullivan County resident and teaches at BOCES where he teaches digital skills. He hopes to grow and diversify the CAB. Sally and other BOT members welcomed LJ and also expressed their thanks to Dr. Neal Hitch for his work and leadership as the outgoing CAB Chair

MOTION to approve the Consent Agenda Items: Minutes of the following meetings: (Amy/Sally)

- 12.16.24 BOT Meeting Minutes
- 12.19.24 Executive Committee Minutes
- 12.17.24 Outreach Committee Minutes
- 1.07.25 Outreach Committee Minutes

In Favor: Don Almquist, Jeff Barnes, Dale Blagrove, Amy Brightfield, Katie Childs, Barb Demarest, Gerard Finn, Jill Fruchter, Leif Johansen, Tanya Kalivas, Pete Madden, Ilya Marritz, Heather Quaintance, Krissy Smith, Sally Stuart

Abstained: None

Opposed: None

Hiring update: (Tim/Mimi) The multimedia reporter position has been narrowed down to a top four. We formally hired Ronald Kelson as part-time production coordinator; he's been at the station helping on the One Small Step project.

Sidenote from Tim: As part of the reporting for the CPB, we have to report back to show the impact the station has had on the community and we got lots of very positive feedback from on the impact of partnerships WJFF has had with local organizations. (See below the attached quotes.)

Finance report: (Katie)

All of our efforts and fundraising are going to move the needle towards further financial stability and achieving our strategic goals. We don't have final 2024 numbers yet as we are waiting on final numbers from the Wayne County Community Endowment. Based on preliminary numbers, we ended at a net positive for the 2024 fiscal year. The final report will hopefully be ready by the next meeting.

Strategic Plan (Leif)

Leif gave an overview of the [progress we've made on our strategic plan in 2024](#). We've finished a lot of the old plan because we surpassed some of those programming and fiscal goals. The progress we've made in 2024 was broken down into categories with specific details on how we've met goals in each objective. Growth areas were also identified. One suggestion from Barb: Put in awards that WJFF has won, both staff awards and as a station overall.

Listener Survey: (Leif/Jill)

We have a draft of the 2025 listener and nonlistener survey. It's similar to last year's survey, and that's intentional so we can track trends and changes. A section of the survey was added that is directed at non-listeners and what can we do to attract them to become listeners. Katie suggested adding 'other' on how you listen. The survey will be conducted widely in the spring.

(Amy left the meeting at 6:55 and Leif took over recording meeting minutes.)

Outreach Committee Update (Mimi)

Discussed upcoming volunteer and sound supporter appreciation events: Werner Herzog movie screening event on 2/20 and Upward Brewery trivia night on 2/26. Outreach has also been discussing strategies for improved board involvement in donor engagement. Barb noted that Jill has been spearheading a "community partners" project, and the board should take a look at the partner outreach spreadsheet and add to it.

Nominating and Governance Committee Updates: (Pete)

Board self-assessment survey. The survey is complete and Pete shared a few of the themes and trends that stood out. Sally agreed to strategize on how more issues can be handled by the whole board rather than the Executive Committee.

Bylaws changes. Pete presented some minor by-laws changes that are best practice for nonprofit organizations. The proposed changes will be posted on the website to cure over the next month, and will be voted on at the March 10 board meeting.

New board candidates. Pete updated the board on Nominating and Governance committee efforts to identify possible candidates to fill Sally's seat for the next board year, and asked board members to share out the prospective board member application. He also asked any board members who plan to leave the board this term to be in touch with him.

MOTION to enter executive session (Sally/Katie) to discuss a confidential financial matter.
All in favor.

MOTION to exit executive session (Sally/Ilya)

The board agreed to form an ad-hoc committee to examine future station partnerships, including: Pete, Leif, Barb, Ilya, Katie, and Tim.

Closing comments: Scenario-planning for potential loss of federal funding from the CPB, and the importance of staying nimble and responsive to any changes to our current levels of funding was discussed.

MOTION to adjourn at 7:34pm (Sally/Gerard)
All in favor.

Submitted by Amy Brightfield and Leif Johansen

Community Feedback from CPB Report

A Single Bite - *Audrey Garro Executive Director:*

...Working with schools, local pantries, food banks and assistance programs, we help low income, rural families access healthy, locally grown food. Each week volunteers deliver scratch-made dinners to 140 food insecure families, feeding 850 food insecure people.

We are particularly grateful to the team and programming at WJFF for supporting our efforts to educate the community about our programming and special events, and to assist us in gaining financial support. WJFF has helped A Single Bite to share our story by broadcasting interviews with key staff, promoting educational programming and collaborative special events, significantly impacting our ability to deliver nutritious food to families and educational programming to local students.

National Resources Defense Council (NRDC) -

Rita Yelda, Senior Communications Manager, Northeast NRDC:

Climate change is our planet's greatest existential threat. From raging wildfires and supercharged storms, climate changes compounding effects can be felt today, outside our own windows. ... Understanding these impacts can help us prepare for what's here, what's avoidable, and what's yet to come; and to better prepare and protect all communities. That understanding comes from exposure and education to the issue, including through public radio like Radio Catskill.

On several occasions through the last year, Radio Catskill has covered topics relating to New York State's position on climate change. Radio Catskill has been integral in continuing to inform and update listeners in the Catskill region on the climate policies that matter most.

Damascus Citizens for Sustainability (DCS) - *Barbara Arrindell, Director:*

WJFF has been very valuable to the work done by Damascus Citizens for Sustainability). From helping get issues out to the public, explaining what's involved and the implications-potential impacts, the very community-minded approach of their programming and special interviews, etc have been very important. The locally produced *Farm and Country*, *Radio Chatskill*, Tim Bruno's interviews, and more have helped the community and our work in relation to oil/gas drilling wastes, harms from other toxics, and important twists and turns related to saving our treasured Milanville Bridge among other issues.

Sullivan 180 - *Shannon Cilento, Director of Community Development & Communications:*

Our partnership with WJFF Radio Catskill has remained a cornerstone of our outreach strategy. Through their skilled media offerings—radio interviews, community service announcements, storytelling, and reporting—we've been able to connect with a broader and more diverse audience, fostering greater awareness around local health issues and prevention efforts.

...

The impact of WJFF Radio Catskill's involvement can be seen in measurable ways—whether it's through increased community engagement, broader understanding of health issues, or the feedback we receive from listeners who are better informed about the resources available to them. Their support continues to play a vital role in helping us achieve our goal of turning around the health of Sullivan County, one degree at a time.

Livingston Manor - Roscoe Central School Districts - *John Evans, Superintendent:*

WJFF has been a valuable resource to the Livingston Manor and Roscoe central school districts. We were able to reach more people in our communities via an interview with Tim Bruno. There I was able to provide valuable information regarding our proposed merger, which did gain voter approval in December. We are thankful to WJFF for being an important news source for our districts.

Liberty Central School District - *Dr. Patrick Sullivan, Superintendent:*

WJFF is an important part of our communications here at Liberty Central School District. I have been interviewed several times on the station on matters including our expanding pre-k program and budget. We also appreciate when the station reaches out on current events, including the proposed state cellphone ban in schools. WJFF helps us reach a wider audience than we can through our in-house communications platforms, helping inform the wider community of the great things happening in our district.

County of Sullivan - *Dan Hust, Communications Director:*

As always, WJFF has proven crucial in conveying important messages from Sullivan County, NY Government.

In 2024, WJFF assisted us in delivering rabies warnings, early voting locations, unexpected closure announcements, and scam alerts. At least twice a week, County government officials are afforded an opportunity to speak – in detail – about useful programs, services, and initiatives that might otherwise go unknown

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Thanks to WJFF in particular, our Food Scrap Recycling Pilot Program reached the needed 400 subscribers to allow us to apply to New York State for a full-fledged composting facility permit, encouraging folks to recycle and compost their organic waste.

La Voz, cultura y noticias hispanas del Valle del Hudson - *Mariel Fiori, Managing Editor:*

It has been a pleasure collaborating with WJFF and its mission of promoting understanding among diverse communities. La Voz en Breve, a weekly current events show in Spanish, with local interviews and music, has contributed to increased awareness and understanding of issues pertinent to the Hispanic community in the Hudson Valley. Some people have mentioned they heard the show on WJFF.

Garnet Health - *Marcy Manheim, Administrator, Marketing & Corporate Communications:*

We truly appreciate our partnership with WJFF and the opportunity to collaborate in providing trusted healthcare expertise and information to your audience which also serves as our community.

Through our collaborations, Garnet Health has been able to increase awareness and understanding of critical health topics, helping community members make more informed decisions about their well-being.

Whether through expert interviews, educational segments, or public service messaging, we've seen a positive response from patients and the public who value access to reliable health information from a media outlet who believes in accurate reporting.

You and your team always get it right!

New York StateWide Senior Action Council - *Loren Pomerantz, President Combined Forces PR:*

New York StateWide Senior Action Council values our partnership with WJFF Radio Catskill in bringing critical information to older adults across the region. Through interviews and discussions on key issues such as Medicare and healthcare scams, WJFF has played an important role in increasing awareness and empowering seniors to advocate for their rights. By elevating

these important conversations, WJFF has helped us reach a broader audience, ensuring that seniors and their families have the knowledge they need to navigate these complex issues.

Upper Delaware Council (UDC)- Laurie Ramie, Executive Director:

The Upper Delaware Council, a non-profit organization of 15 local governments and two states that border the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River in NY and PA and work cooperatively with the National Park Service on river conservation, strongly values the forum that WJFF Radio Catskill offers to broadcast issues of concern to the river valley region as well as promote community activities.

For two years, Radio Catskill has served as the media sponsor for the Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep ... with participation increasing from approximately 350 in 2023 to 475 in 2024 (based on the number of commemorative team t-shirts sporting the UDC and WJFF logos that were distributed after public service announcements and live interviews with UDC personnel aired).

Radio Catskill gave extensive coverage to the first New York State meeting in many years of the intrastate-federal Delaware River Basin Commission in Narrowsburg on June 5, 2024 that included an activist rally and march, impassioned public comments on climate change, and the debut of a watershed documentary.

...

[The] station has also highlighted the UDC's funding emergency ... and on Sept. 12, 2024, Radio Catskill dedicated its Annual Community Awards to the theme of organizations and individuals committed to environmental stewardship and sustainability with a well-produced, elegant ceremony.

Radio Catskill leadership is engaged in and responsive to spotlighting the issues that matter to their listeners through balanced local journalism and creative shows that reflect the community's diversity, opinions, and interests.

Hope's Compass (& Voices of Survivors project) - Hope Blecher Croney, Founder:

Over the past two years, because of the WJFF team, listeners became acquainted with the series of programs that encompassed Voices of Survivors: Inspiring Hope, Sanctuary, Compassion, and Community.

This series was the educational part of my volunteer role as an ambassador for the worldwide Daffodil Garden Project. The mission of that project is to plant 1.5 million yellow daffodils in

commemoration of the children who perished in the Holocaust. To date, in Sullivan County, we have planted over 2,000 bulbs. ... WJFF's team has shared these events over the airwaves. In addition, as we blossomed from planting the bulbs to the in-person educational programs, WJFF was an essential partner.

Voices of Survivors: Inspiring Hope, Sanctuary, Compassion and Community grew from eight days to three months and over 400 people came to the in person exhibition at The Liberty Museum and Arts Center in Liberty, NY, and The Sullivan County Historical Society and Museum in Hurleyville, NY. With the permission of the [Holocaust] survivors (first, second, and third generations), artists and musicians, and the assistance of WJFF's devices, I was able to record the stories of these witnesses, these survivors and their children and grandchildren. We have the voices of the poets and authors of various texts.

Delaware Riverkeeper Network - *Maya Van Rossum, Leader:*

This past year, WJFF Radio helped us raise awareness on a critical issue essential for protecting the Wild & Scenic Upper Delaware River.

Camp FIMFO is a development proposal to transform an over 200 acre parcel located in Sullivan County, New York ... The project, if allowed to happen, is expected to set a dangerous precedent that will open the door to similar projects up and down the Wild & Scenic River corridor inflicting amplified harmful impact on the River resource, on the local communities, and on the businesses that rely upon the beauty and health of the River corridor for their economic livelihoods.

The public was given a short time window in which to submit comment and only one limited 2-hour public hearing ... [But] because of two radio shows, the public was more aware of the project and became aware of the opportunity to comment.

While it is impossible to count the impact in the form of public engagement in the comment opportunity, I received on the order of 3 communications whereby people said they had heard me on the WJFF Radio show ... Two had not heard of the project previously, and one was aware of the project but not the opportunity to comment – not until they heard the show.

American Red Cross -

Dan Hartman, Regional Communications Manager – Eastern New York Region:

We appreciate Radio Catskill's support of our mission, enhancing public awareness of our programs and services and how community members can help. On occasions when the American Red Cross is experiencing blood shortages due to inclement weather locally and

large-scale disasters in other parts of the country, the station has helped with news coverage and live interviews to encourage local residents to donate. Through that type of support, the Red Cross has been able to overcome those short-term challenges, ensuring that life-saving blood is available for patients in need.

Western Sullivan Public Library - Callison Stratton, Youth Programs Coordinator:

Radio Catskill is one of the Western Sullivan Public Library's most valuable community partners. We frequently receive feedback that patrons hear about us through the radio. The station provides WSPL with so many opportunities to connect and share important information with our community. Whether it's sharing upcoming library programs on the web calendar, featuring our staff on-air, or co-sponsoring programs like our Youth Podcasting Club, WJFF Radio Catskill does so much to lift up our library and raise local awareness about our services.