

Narrative history of Media Reform SC (MRSC)

Prepared June 10, 2014

Media Reform SC began shortly after one of its current members gave a presentation titled “Media Reform. Why? How?” at the Unitarian Church in Charleston, SC on November 7, 2010. At that gathering a sign-up sheet was passed around asking for names of people who might want to study the media reform issue further. This gave rise to a meeting of five interested people on November 29, 2010. At our first meeting (notes attached), we decided to attempt to establish a web site to make media issues of local, state, and national relevance available to the public. By our second meeting (January 17, 2011), we adopted the formal name “Media Reform SC” and began working on our web site in earnest. Since then we have been consistently busy on a number of fronts – all aimed at educating the public about media issues and making media in our local area more inclusive and more supportive of healthy democratic processes.

To date, nearly all expenses incurred have been paid by MRSC member donations. A few dollars were spontaneously donated at free public movie showings (<\$100 in total) and one donation of \$100 came from a private citizen.

Highlights of our activities since the first two meetings appear below in outline form and chronological order:

- April 2011: Our web site – MediaReformSC.org – went on line.
- April 2011: Two of our members attended the National Conference for Media Reform in Boston, MA.
- June 2011: Two members attended a Nonprofit Boot Camp held by the Palmetto Technology Hub, which dealt with web-site issues.
- August, 2011: We learned about “covert consolidation” (news sharing agreements between TV stations owned by different companies) through contact with personnel at Free Press (see Freepress.net).
- August/September, 2011: Members examined the public files at two local TV stations.
- September 2011: Two members met with the District Director at then Congressman Tim Scott’s local office to explain our group’s concerns about local covert consolidation.
- Fall 2011: Two members of our group published articles on media reform in local newspapers.
- December 2011: We submitted comments to the FCC regarding difficulty accessing public files at local TV stations and urging that such files be made available on line.
- January 2012: Members inspected public files on political advertising at two local TV stations.
- January 2012: We presented a free public showing of the film “Broadcast Blues,” followed by audience discussion. Established a “Contacts” email list for people in the audience who wished to be included.
- March 2012: Formed a task force from within our group to look into the matter of applying for a Low Power FM radio license.
- May 2012: Held a meeting of MRSC and community people interested in establishing an LPFM station in Charleston.

- Spring 2012: Screened several films within our group and presented a free public showing of the film “Outfoxed” in May. Sold a few copies of the book *The FOX Effect* for slightly less than we had paid for them.
- June 2012: Held a free public discussion of the book *The FOX Effect*. One of our members wrote an article about this in a local newspaper.
- June 2012: Two members of the group participated in a webinar on selecting an FM frequency in anticipation of applying for an LPFM license.
- Summer 2012: Three members of the group undertook a massive rewriting and updating of the “Who owns Charleston’s media?” section of our web site.
- Fall 2012: The web site was updated. The group spent substantial amounts of time exploring various aspects and possibilities of making application for an LPFM license.
- December 2012: Four members of the group attended a session on LPFM applications (given by the Prometheus Radio Project) at the Southern Human Rights Organizers’ Conference, held in Charleston.
- December 2012: We raised the question of whether we wanted to continue pursuing an LPFM license and the answer was a resounding “yes,” despite many complexities.
- January 2013: We discussed the matter of gaining non-profit status. Inasmuch as applying for 501(c)(3) status with the federal government would be costly and time-consuming and could not be accomplished in time for our LPFM license application, we opted to apply for non-profit status in the State of South Carolina.
- January 2013: We applied for Prometheus Radio Project’s “Torchbearer” program, whereby we would get \$2,000 worth of assistance in applying for the LPFM license for only \$200.
- February 2013: The Articles of Incorporation for the nonprofit "Media Reform SC" were filed with the State of South Carolina. MRSC was officially designated by the State as a company, organized solely for charitable and educational purposes on February 7, 2013.
- April 2013: Two members attended the National Conference for Media Reform in Denver, CO. Met with personnel from Prometheus Radio while there.
- April 2013: We elected officers for Media Reform SC, Inc.: Virginia Friedman (President), Vikki Matsis (Secretary and Director), Will Moredock (Treasurer and Director), Lee Barbour (Director), Faye Steuer (contact person).
- April 2013: We sent a letter to all FCC Commissioners asking that they deny Sinclair Broadcast Group’s plan to own two TV stations in the Charleston market – something that we read as contrary to existing FCC rules.
- June 2013: A second letter reiterating our position was sent to the FCC.
- July 2013: Members prepared two PowerPoint presentations – one on LPFM and one on media reform generally – for future use with community groups.
- July 2013: MRSC was accepted into Prometheus Radio Project’s Torchbearer program.
- September 2013: Letter to the Editor from MRSC member re Sinclair Broadcast Group’s proposed TV station purchase published in local paper.
- October 2013: Held a music/art fundraiser at Treehouse Recording. (Unfortunately Treehouse has never paid MRSC the money received.)
- October 2013: We submitted our application for an LPFM radio license to the FCC. Our proposed name for the station is OHM Radio.

- January 2014: We began efforts to try to bring Dr. Michael Copps – former FCC Commissioner and Special Adviser to Common Cause’s Media and Democracy Reform Initiative – to Charleston for a speaking engagement.
- February 2014: We began exploring procedures for applying for 501(c)(3) status.
- February 2014: We opened an MRSC bank account.
- February 2014: The FCC granted us a permit to begin construction of an LPFM station.
- February-May 2014: We explored various options for positioning our broadcasting tower (and related facilities) so as to reach the maximum number of listeners who are currently unserved and unheard on local commercial radio.
- March 2014: We sent letters to DOJ and the FCC expressing our opposition to the proposed Comcast/TimeWarner merger.
- March 2014: We held the first Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors and Officers of Media Reform SC, Inc. Faye Steuer was added as a Director.
- April 2014: We instituted the practice of having a member present a brief report on a timely, media-reform-related topic at the end of each meeting.
- May 2014: We instituted dues of “a minimum of \$25 yearly.”
- April/May/June 2014: We repaired a partial crash of our web site and began studying changing our web platform to WordPress.
- May/June 2014: We began planning a large music fundraiser for September.
- June 2014: Three members participated in free webinar on station governance for LPFM stations.
- June 2014: Established committee to propose governance policies for group’s approval.

Throughout this time we have been continuously adding new information to our web site and attempting to keep it up to date.

In the future, Media Reform SC will be focusing its efforts on

- continuing public education about media reform through our web site and other means,
- establishing a robust, democratic, noncommercial, nonprofit community radio station that highlights the needs and interests of all members of the community – most particularly those that are underserved by commercial radio,
- encouraging strong and wise governance of the radio operation,
- supporting technological proficiency in the running of the station, and
- perhaps most importantly, raising sufficient funds to sustain a vibrant community radio station over many years.
- In the next 1 to 2 years we will be working specifically on
 - optimal placement of the broadcast tower, with necessary engineering studies,
 - purchasing tower and transmission equipment,
 - outfitting a small office,
 - staffing (probably one part-time employee),
 - attracting and training reliable volunteers,
 - scheduling outstanding, locally-originated and locally-relevant programs, and
 - raising sufficient money to support all these efforts, with a back-up emergency fund.