

KCEP

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the agency under its temporary management during audits and investigation.

EOB has now begun to correct its own economic problems and look for solutions, according to Childs, who returned to the agency after a 20-year-long tenure there ended in 1997; she accepted the interim leadership within the past two months. At the July board meeting, the topic of the sale of KCEP was mentioned, according to Childs. "I did not propose it or suggest it [selling KCEP]."

Childs said, explaining her fiduciary responsibility to assess the overall agency, "We are looking inside the organization," and "considering all possibilities" to resolve financial shortages. "I did not suggest the station be sold, but it is something that had to be looked at."

Childs said that all assets of the organization have to be evaluated and discussed; for example, she mentioned their transportation facility on West Bonanza near Martin Luther King Boulevard among the EOB assets.

Winston agrees. "I think that Jean [Childs] and the board have the responsibility to look at all the possibilities." He prefaced that by saying, "EOB as an entity is more valuable than its parts."

On one of the many talk shows that air on KCEP (inclusive of this newspaper's own all-talk information show called "Black Power"), the topic of KCEP's ownership was discussed on the "Patricia Cunningham Show" Saturday.

Cunningham hosted her show and preempted her planned topic in order to address recent events about the status of the station's ownership. She wanted to have an open discussion about "interesting issues raised."

She decided to discuss the topic because many residents had read news articles (*Las Vegas Sun*, 8/18/05 and 08/19/05) about the KCEP and EOB issue. Cunningham said she was concerned about some of the "spinning" where some critics espoused reasons for selling the station other than the goal of resolving EOB finances.

Some individuals have made public criticisms and are calling for other significant changes in the way KCEP operates and the audience it serves. In particular, the first caller on Cunningham's show raised the issue of whether KCEP is

exclusive of the Hispanic community.

The man, who declined to give his name, spent more than one-third of the hour making calumnious comments questioning "how many Hispanics" work at the station or are being served by the programming, which consists of music, hip-hop, religious, urban contemporary, R&B, as well as youth- and adult-oriented talk format with frequent public service announcements.

Cunningham addressed this on-air: "We're reaching out to [all] people with information." She took several more favorable calls, including a woman who identified herself as a Hispanic listener. She said, "There are a lot of things I find out that are going on in Las Vegas," and added that she has been a regular listener for seven years.

Cunningham said that she is sure that the needs of the Hispanic community are being served by the television and radio stations available to them.

Childs, who is aware of suggestions and allegations of bias in the programming or level of service to Hispanics, spoke to the issue yesterday: "Being pro-someone does not make you anti-anyone."

She continued, "KCEP is part of the overall (EOB) organization, and we serve a high percentage of the Latino population. We are fully integrated; we have everyone in this organization."

Childs and Cunningham both called attention to the number of Hispanic-owned or operated television stations and radio outlets in the local community that have targeted Spanish language programs and cover the spectrum for Hispanics. Proponents of KCEP are quick to note that it is the only station that has consistently addressed the needs of Blacks in Clark County.



Local reporter Damon Hodge, left, and George Curry, editor-in-chief of the National Newspaper Publishers Association, participate in a KCEP talk-show earlier in the year.

"There are at least three television stations and [several other Hispanic community media]... I wouldn't even get into the fray, because those that are addressing it...that becomes almost racist, what they are saying," Childs concluded.

Winston said that the programming of any public service medium, like public television Channel 10, has to provide a product that "appeals to the constituents [listener-donors]", and programming has to be "consistent" to achieve that goal. Our product [the music] is hip-hop."

He added, "We are the highest rated public broadcasting station in Las Vegas. We were higher [in ratings] than some of the commercial stations..."

Winston said that he wants to clear up the confusion and "misrepresentation" that a majority of the revenues for KCEP comes from public funds — grants, state allocated funds from the Federal Government or taxes.

Winston said that some of the comments and perceptions that are being launched at the station are "convoluted."

"The other misinforma-

tion is that we operate on taxpayers' dollars..." he said. The station generates most of our money from voluntary donations and revenues from its membership drives. Winston cites "23 percent is grant funds the rest of the 77 percent is from underwriting, fundraising and community events."

Winston also wants to clear up any doubts that the station has huge debts that would be alleviated by a sale of the station. About the reported debt of \$228,000, he said "That's incorrect." He didn't give an exact amount, but estimated that it is around "\$60,000" and added, "My task was to make [the radio station] profitable. We have. We are optimistic that this year we would be able to pay that."

To understand the broader picture, and, perhaps, the basis for some questions, perceptions and criticisms about the relevancy of KCEP today, the founding of KCEP and EOB's mission must be explored. EOB is a multifaceted organization providing assistance for families with children, seniors and low-income residents. It's prime

objective, according to Childs and its published information, is to serve the poor — in myriad ways. One of the largest EOB programs is Head Start.

EOB was one of the programs born out of the federal War on Poverty initiatives. KCEP was, by some accounts, a very creative way to provide job skills training for community residents; the station also served as a vital tool for disseminating information to the broader community. In general, the station has kept to that mission over the years.

Winston, who recalls the way the station came about: "William 'Bob' Bailey applied for a construction permit. It was his idea (for a training program). He is the one who filed the application with the FCC... that was kind of his background, broadcasting. It went on the air as a 10-watt station. It evolved from there. The next major turn was the power increase... Many people from the community, and churches and organizations donated to get the tower on Black Mountain..."

This close relationship

with the community over the years is why the possibility of the station being sold is so significant — especially if the format changes away from what the community has relied upon.

Winston and Childs both said they are open to looking at the programming.

The answer to the looming question of whether EOB will opt to sell off its radio asset is not clear at this point. Childs said it is important to her for people to be aware that she does appreciate the history and the community support for KCEP, "I want everyone to know that I'm new [to this current position], but I'm not new [to the community]."

Cunningham took part of her show to explain to listeners that the sale of a non-commercial station like KCEP "isn't as easy as who's got the dollars." She explained, "The approval process is very long and complicated."

Childs said that no arrangement to seek a buyer for KCEP has taken place. She did say, however, that a broker had been consulted to get some idea of the value of the asset, which is reported to have a potential selling price of \$5 million to \$10 million. "That's where we got a lot of our information from," she said. But she cautioned that those numbers are only estimates and a lot of factors could affect the actual value. The existing FCC license to operate as a public station is a big part of the value; there aren't that many available, she said.

At this stage, Childs is considering a number of alternatives to present, "We are asking for funds from the community. We are working with the bank to do some restructuring of loans," she said. "It's a large organization, and we are looking at everything."

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