



City of Asheville, NC

July 20, 2009

Asheville City Council

Ms. Patricia Garlinghouse, Director, URTV
Rev. Jerry Young, Chairman of the Board of Directors, URTV
31 College Place – Suite 20-A
Asheville, North Carolina 28801

Subject – Follow-up to Meeting with the City Boards and Commission Committee

Dear Rev. Young and Ms. Garlinghouse:

It was our pleasure for the City's Boards and Commissions Committee to meet with you all yesterday (July 14, 2009) to discuss our mutual interest in the success of URTV. We appreciated the spirit of cooperation that your representatives brought to the table.

During our discussion, various concerns were noted. It was subsequently agreed that the City's Boards and Commissions Committee would consult with the fuller City Council and follow-up with a summary written list of our concerns for your further consideration.

It was our understanding that it was the intention of the URTV Board and staff to voluntarily address these concerns with an eye on developing an internally generated intervention plan sometime within the next sixty days – or no later than September 30th.

We appear to have shared agreement that an informal cooperative process would, at this stage, best serve our collective mission of supporting the future of URTV. In that spirit of cooperation, please note the following as a summary of issues that may merit consideration—

- 1) Although the word "transparency" is frequently used in discussion, there is not a sense that the concept is always effectively matched with action within the organization.
- 2) There are indications that URTV policies are applied selectively and in reaction to conflictual circumstances versus as a tool for managing and/or preventing such.
- 3) The persistent degree of internal turmoil within the organization involving membership, staff, and Board leadership speaks to the potential benefits of organizational development/enhancement services.
- 4) Conflict within URTV – normal to any dynamic entity – appears to accelerate into intense and personal adversarial process more often than is typical to such entities.

- 5) It has been reported that individuals with criminal backgrounds and/or cautionary fiduciary histories have primary leadership responsibilities within URTV – as a new organization reaching for community acceptance and support; it is our encouragement that care be used in leadership assignments.
- 6) We have received repeated accusations of violations of the open meeting requirements governing URTV's Board actions – both in form and function – we encourage a strengthening of the Board's efforts to meet these requirements in a manner that precludes reproach.
- 7) There appears to be room to improve the problem solving and conflict management methods used to address issues within the organization.
- 8) There is a disenfranchised vocal minority that has a continued stated interest in participating in and upholding URTV. We support efforts to reengage with this group and to seek some reconciliation toward what appears, from an outside perspective, to be a common mission – securing a positive place for URTV within the community.
- 9) Minutes of the Board's meetings (open and closed session) are not always accessible or complete – notice of meetings may not always be provided on a timely and visible basis.
- 10) The organization's membership disciplinary/banning procedures appear to have been occasionally applied in abrupt and harsh fashion with limited or unrealistic recourse.
- 11) The roles of the various leadership functions (Director, Board Members, Producers, City County liaison, etc.) appear to need clarification and publication.
- 12) By-laws revisions are typically used to improve organizational efficiency and function – the contract between the old and new by-laws of the organization seem to indicate other agendas that may be counter-productive to transparent, fair, and healthy organizational development.
- 13) URTV is free to support diverse programming in keeping with the constraints of its governing charter. We encourage that some system of consumer information/program identification be provided to enable viewers to filter programming they may find offensive.
- 14) Although the City of Asheville has no direct management authority over URTV, we do have stewardship accountabilities involving funding and an on-going management agreement that we must uphold in good fashion. To this point we have not had a sense that the level of partnership between URTV leadership and the City has been adequate to our shared accountabilities and interests in insuring the long-term viability of public access TV.

There have been other concerns brought to our attention; however, these represent a summary of those that have been most persistent. We recognize that our information and perspective will not necessarily be completely accurate and valid. We offer these concerns with that consideration, but a shared belief that what we know, your leadership should too.

In this regard you are free to respond as you feel best. We are less interested in a "formal response to charges" than an internal effort within URTV to right its own ship and press on to

good places. Please consider us an interested partner with a wish to support you to this good end.

Sincerely,

Jan Davis,
Vice Mayor
Board and Commissions Committee Chair

Robin Cape
Councilmember
Boards and Commissions Committee

Carl Mumpower
Councilmember
Boards and Commissions Committee

Copy: Mayor and Council
Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
Gary Jackson, City Manager
Jeff Richardson, Assistant City Manager
✓ Lauren Bradley, Assistant to the City Manager