

Written Public Comments Submitted for the January 31, 2023 Board Meeting

- 1) I am writing in support of KZYY, the remaining staff, and Marty Durlin's decision to fire Alicia Bales.

No doubt Alicia did some wonderful things for the station. However, the vast majority of us cannot attest to her character or her behavior behind the scenes. I urge our community to recognize that they only have a sliver of the picture, and that the tough decision to let her go is what's ultimately best for the station and its stakeholders. Onward and upward for KZYY!

Anonymous

- 2) Dear Board of Directors,

I am writing about the firing of Alicia Bales as Program Director. I encourage you in the strongest possible terms to arbitrate whatever the problems are and bring Alicia back immediately.

I have a long history with the station. I was hired in 1992 as Bookkeeper at KZYY. I held that position until 1997, always as an independent contractor, which meant I was able to avoid the staff drama, and maintain a sense of financial control, stability and continuity with CPB and the station's auditors.

During the early years the station was in a constant state of turmoil and upheaval. Managers and staff came and went faster than you could blink an eye. I call this period the infancy and toddler-hood of the station. I thought the station had grown to maturity in the last few years. The firing of Alicia reminds me of the earlier years and turns my stomach.

The Board needs to direct management to act in the long term interest of the station, and work out whatever the problems are between the GM and Alicia. Alicia is a very popular Program Director, and in my opinion has done an excellent job to date. I am pretty sure a majority of the membership agrees with me on this. If Alicia is not brought back I believe there will be a significant drop off in membership support. I, personally, will not support the station any more, and I have been a member since 1991.

At this time, with the move to Ukiah pending, financial stability and staff continuity are essential. I understand that the current GM plans to leave the station this year. That's enough change. Why not work it out with Alicia and leave the station on a sound footing?

Please do whatever you need to do to get Alicia back ASAP. Thank you.

Respectfully,
Sheila Leighton

3) To the Board of Directors of KZYX,

As a regular listener of KZYX and an ongoing member, I am very unhappy about the firing of Alicia Bales. She was a bright spot on the radio and her Covid show during the pandemic was crucial to many of us listening at home. Please reconsider this decision!

Sincerely,
Jeanne Eliades Mailliard

4) Dear BOD,

I was dismayed to hear today that Alecia was fired from KZYX. Unfortunately, this radio station has a history of firing/letting go competent employees and volunteers. This news makes me regret the \$100.00 donation I made in December of 2022.

I'm sure I will hear scuttlebutt in the coming weeks. If there isn't a very compelling reason for this firing, I will no longer be a contributor to the radio station.

With regret,
Ellen Athens

5) I'm incredibly disappointed in KYZX for firing their best employee. Alicia has made this community radio actually connected to the community! Pomo Perspective is one of my favorite shows.

Bring back Alicia!!!
Megan Wolf

6) Alicia Bales has been a wonderful presence at KZYX. She's a great journalist and you can tell that she really cares about the community. I am stunned to hear that she has been fired. I'm really disappointed. Please get her back!

Sincerely,
Adele Horne
KZYX member and contributor

7) Dear KZYX Board of Directors,

I am a longtime supporter of KZYX--since before the station was even on the air when I interviewed Sean Donovan--"Climbing the Pyramids of Philo"--for Mendocino Art Center. In the past I've been a programmer/host on *Women's Voices*, *Wild Sage Poetry Hour*, and *Pivot Point*. In the late nineties I was an on-air intern on *The Community News* with Annie Esposito and hold fond memories of experiences like talking to and broadcasting Julia Butterfly on Luna by cell phone.

It is as a current listener, contributor, and community member, that I wholeheartedly ask you to immediately reinstate Alicia Littletree Bales to her position as KZYX's Program Director. With her perspective, can-do attitude, vitality, and exceptional skills, Alicia has brought together the most compelling, community-wide and relevant programming and interviews that KZYX has ever had.

If there are interpersonal conflicts on staff, please consider alternate routes to remedy, but whatever, please don't lose Alicia's genius and effectiveness in growing our community enthusiasm for tuning in!

I'm afraid that with Alicia's severance community trust and relations with KZYYX have been negatively impacted. I hope you will repair this mistake. Alicia is an important part of realizing the move to Ukiah.

With Best Wishes for KZYYX,
Christy Wagner

8) Hi KZYYX,

I was disappointed to hear of the firing of Alicia Bales as Program Director at KZYYX&Z. I dipped out as a listener several years back, but thought that was a wise hiring decision and was hopeful for the station's future growth. This decision (and the pretty embarrassing episode of The Discussion on the 16th) make it clear that at bottom many of the old problems still remain. Cut off your own leg with a chainsaw, then ask the public for donations to cover the cost of bandages? Best of luck with that.

Sincerely,
Heather Seggel

9) Dear Ms. Durlin:

We've never met, and I'm sure you've heard some unpleasant -- and untrue -- things about me, but that past history is irrelevant.

I'm writing to you today about my experience with Alicia Bales while I was both a Board member at the Mendocino Environmental Center ("The MEC") and a popular programmer at KMEC.

My program was supported, in part, by matching donations from the Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation. My cohost was first Sid Cooperrider, then Mary Massey.

Our show was about national security. No one cared we were a low power station. No one cared about our small broadcast area. Our online audience was huge. One of our shows with CIA whistleblower Ray McGovern has over 76,000 views on Youtube. Our show had A-list guests, like Tom Drake, Bill Binney, Edward Snowden, and Glenn Greenwald, from the 2014 Academy Award-winning documentary, *Citizenfour*.

KMEC was the little station that could!

What followed is sad, very sad.

I will say the following loudly and unequivocally: Alicia Bales destroyed KMEC and she almost destroyed The MEC.

How?

Ms. Bales used both The MEC and KMEC for her own personal gain. She was coldly calculating and rapaciously ambitious about using The MEC and KMEC as platforms to launch her job search. Her behavior bordered on the sociopathic.

Ms. Bales's first move was to manipulate her way on to the Board as Board President at a time when The MEC was leaderless.

Lara Anderson had quit as President. There was no money in our checking account. And suddenly, and mysteriously, Alicia Bales was not just a Board member, but she was President of the Board.

Ms. Bales's first action was to purge the Board of anyone she perceived as a possible threat -- anyone who might question her, disagree with her, or even voice a dissenting opinion. Ms. Bales wanted a rubberstamp board. When she didn't immediately get it, she made up false allegations. She cried. She screamed. She pouted. She was, by turns, either passive aggressive or emotionally violent. She did whatever she thought it would take to get her rubberstamp board.

And she got it.

Highly respected Board member, Edwin Nieves, was the first to quit.

Board members, Joel Thompson (a disabled person), Emmanuel Mallo (a Black West African person), and Josefina Duenas (a Latina and Ukiah City Councilmember) were all forced from The MEC's Board.

Board member Mary Massey quit. Ms. Massey had been a professional public radio staffer at Nashville Public Radio, WPLN, and a professional fundraiser at the Ronald McDonald House.

Then I quit.

Ms. Bales made our Board positions untenable.

Ms. Bales's first job search focused on being the first program manager at Mendocino County's newly created Climate Action Committee. She attempted to get that job by circumventing the county's civil service system. The job was classified as a "private contractor".

Ms. Bales manipulated then Second District Supervisor John McCowen into supporting her, even to the extent of profiling her at one or two Mendocino County Board of Supervisors meetings.

How did Bales and McCowen know each other? McCowen was our landlord at The MEC. Also, McCowen seemed like a suitor. Bales and McCowen fawned over one another, and even hugged each other, during breaks at Board meetings.

The total compensation for that county job was over \$110,000.

It was an outrageous display of cronyism.

When public outcry caused the Mendocino Board of Supervisors to pull the job, Ms. Bales then focused on the newly vacant program director's job at KZYX. She got the job, of course. The MEC and KMEC were a good jumping off point for Bales. The plug was soon pulled from KMEC. Nothing but dead air now. And The MEC is a shadow of its former self.

Years later, while waiting in line at the Ukiah Food Co-op, Mr. Nieves himself told me and Ms. Massey that it had always been Ms. Bales's intention to close down The MEC and KMEC. Her one fundraising effort consisted of merely attending an event at the old Yokayo Bowling.

My only question at this point?

How did the Machiavellian Alicia Bales last this long at KZYX?

Sincerely,
John Sakowicz

10) Email to the BOD

Anyone who has worked for a not-for-profit entity is aware that most employees, if not all employees, can be dismissed at will. I know this from my previous employment with Nashville's WPLN, Vanderbilt School of Nursing, Family and Children's Services and the Ronald McDonald House. My complete work experience was in the area of non-profit management. I was an at-will employee expected to take direction from board/management while doing my job of fund raising, alumni and donor relations, special events, and direct mail. I interacted with the staff/clients of these organizations in a respectful and appropriate manner at all times.

Let me say this again: It was expected and I was held accountable to collaboratively work with upper management, staff and the respective boards. The boards of these organizations held me accountable for creating, funding, and implementing a budget each year. Period. No personal agendas and no reorganizing the management structure or policies. This is how the real world works and functions. It's not for the faint of heart. It can be extremely stressful.

While saving an eagle in a tree (the first topic of Ms. Bales new podcast) is somewhere on the spectrum of Mendocino County needs, to me it is a need far behind the many homeless people I see every day in Ukiah and surrounding areas. As a priority, an eagle in a tree is below our county's failing infrastructure, below our county's unfunded pension liability, below our weak and ineffective Board of Supervisors and the budget deficits hidden by the previous CEO, and below the failing local cannabis industry that impacts hundreds of families. There are so many pressing needs in our county.

As mentioned, Alicia Bales is gearing up to produce a podcast which depends on listeners subscriptions. This reminds me of Alicia Bales passing the hat just to keep the Mendocino Environmental Center (the MEC) open and to pay the past due electric bill.

As the MEC's president, Ms. Bales had no long term or short terms goals. No plans to create and implement a budget. No plan to work with existing programmers and/or to recruit new blood to the Center or KMEC. These all needed to be created and shaped with the existing board at the time. That didn't happen. Ms. Bales immediately appointed a group of her cohorts who parroted her words and beliefs. The friends whom she hand picked worked at cross purposes with the rest of us. That is, one part of the board was trying to keep the Center open, while the other, under Alicia Bales' direction, worked to close it down. These cohorts had no clue as to what it took to run a non-profit, just like Ms. Bales. When COVID hit, it was the nail in the coffin.

I write this to remind all of us that not all people are suited to work and thrive within a structure not of their making. And yet, if you believe in the purpose and mission, in this case, public radio, you will do what it takes to make it work for the board, staff, volunteers, and of course, the listeners, members, and underwriters. It isn't about personal agendas.

Mary Massey

- 11) As a long time listener and subscriber, I would like to say that the recent firing of Alicia Bales is very upsetting to me. Since she became program director at kzyx she has instituted a great many innovative and essential programming changes and improvements. I am appalled that she was so summarily fired and I would like to see her reinstated as program director. I'll be looking at your website tomorrow to attend your meeting by Zoom. Please reinstate Alicia!

Sincerely,
Ellen Weed

12) I'm really upset that Alicia Bales was fired. She was doing a wonderful job!

Rhoda Teplow,
former board member

13) Dear Board Members:

My sympathy to you all, who by law cannot speak what you know about Alicia Bales's departure; My sympathy to Alicia Bales, who did a fine job as Program Director while she could, and who has now lost that job because she cannot; My sympathy most especially to Marty Durlin who led KZYX from nigh-disaster just yesterday to its reachable goal-orientation of today. It's fair to say that Durlin's first excellent management decision was to hire Bales as PD.

--"Tragic" is a much mis-used word. Nonetheless it's the right one for Durlin's situation. She made the right decision, completely supported by the Board. Yet that right decision has cost her her own job, by her own assessment that her position is untenable, given the reactions of the audience which, again by law, cannot know the details of Bales's self-canceling behavior.

--Perhaps my deepest sympathy is communal: we have all lost in this tragedy, as the community always does in a tragedy.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Middlebrook

14) Hello,

We are long-listening KZYX & Z supporters, local musicians. We're always traveling all through the world hearing different radio.

We are writing in effect to protest the firing of Alicia Bales the program director by a manager who is leaving soon. We are recommending mediation and not replacing Alicia Bales.

Alicia put the community in the community by including Spanish speakers with very cool Spanish-language programming, and local indigenous leaders and community members including the current leaders of the Coyote Band of Pomo. We are sure that one way to turn ourselves away from racism is to hear the stories, from their mouths, of people who look different from us or speak a different language. This way we come to see each other as people, just people, having many of the same challenges.

Programming that represents the diverse community we do live in, helps us work together for a better society.

And also, we appreciate the way Alicia pulled in Dr Colfax during the Pandemic. Information is key. Thank you for airing so much wonderful programming there at KZYX!

Do not replace Alicia Bales. She's brought more to the station than I think we've ever seen.

All Blessings,
Sheba Love and Diane Patterson

15) as much as I love KZYX I think it's time to abolish the affiliation with NPR it's money that should be spent locally for local programmers and also not support the national propaganda of the NPR radio, for example the peace this morning about yoga leading to conspiracy theories... it should be an embarrassment to continue the affiliation with NPR I support the shortwave radio report and peer to peer

media and I think the example of KPIG in Santa Cruz should be followed for this station.

Going to war for democracy is still going to war it should be a national embarrassment what you guys are saying and doing!

Jonas Rowe

16) Hi Marty,

I believe that you are the KZYY station manager that fired Alicia Bales. I heard today that Alicia Bales was fired today.

I believe that Alicia Bales was doing an amazing job and was able to gain the community's interest in supporting KZYY. She renewed the feeling the community had when KZYY first came online. I for one have listened to many more great musical programs, and other programs since she came aboard. Alicia Bales deserves her job back. I want to support your move to Ukiah, but under the current circumstances it is not possible for me to support the station.

I moved here in 1978 and have used KZYY to inform me about many issues since then and listened to many of the great programs all along.

Please call me.
Annemarie Weibel

P.S.: I also left you a phone message.

17) Alicia as been doing a wonderful job and brings a younger, local shine to her job. An explanation is necessary for your letting her go.

Jan DeSipio

18) While I am aware that the KZYY board of directors has no say in programming decisions, also that confidentiality re personnel/personal matters is structural, I must voice my distress re the abrupt firing of Alicia Bales.

I wonder if my impression that there was no mediation around that time is correct.

I am a longtime volunteer music programmer/listener/member with decades of experience in college, commercial, & community radio. In the absence of the actual, factual Big Picture, acknowledging that carved-in-stone secrecy is meant to protect all parties, I hold great empathy for all involved in this unfortunate occurrence.

As a longtime---even obsessive---listener, I have been thrilled with the variety, diversity, outreach to previously unheard-from communities, timely reporting on salient issues, visionary innovation, local focus, & sense of openness to public input characterizing KZYY programming under Alicia's adept direction. I credit her for stellar public health leadership

throughout the pandemic. I miss her tireless, upbeat presence & special sparkle on air. If rumors are credible, the departure of two local Native American programmers is a loss.

I am concerned about future cascade effects of the firing. Will listener/supporters who interpret "member supported community radio" as directly/democratically empowering them be disillusioned? During upcoming fund drives, will they be as pleased with & supportive of on-air offerings? With only rumors, gossip, distortions, innuendoes instead of facts circulating, would good will toward KZYY be damaged in the long term?

Throughout inevitable changes, I treasure the privilege of serving the music & feel proud to share the schedule with accomplished programmers. I commit to keep working harmoniously with everyone involved.

Ultimately, what we broadcast is bigger than all of us.

Respectfully,

Liz Helenchild aka Bessie Mae Mucho aka Latenight Liz

19) Public Comments for KZYY Board MEETING 1/31/23

We all know what Alicia brought to programming was an asset to the station and Mendocino County. What we all are not aware of are the circumstances and “process” that led to and resulted in Alicia’s sudden termination.

It is my understanding that Management and Board President willfully disregarded the entire grievance process as outlined in the station handbook (see below). This is potentially a contractual violation resulting in wrongful termination.

1. It was Alicia that requested mediation after experiencing hostile dynamics with Marty ~ 1.5 years ago
2. Recently as things escalated Alicia requested another mediation. She approached Dina, board president. Dina refused to follow up. Alicia approached Marty. Marty refused. Instead of participating in requested mediation, management instead demanded that Alicia participate in a performance evaluation.

This denial of grievance proceeding is against protocols as stated in the KZYY Handbook (copied below with highlights added). None of the procedures were followed by Management. See pertinent section of the Station Handbook highlighted below.

3. Alicia left a recent work zoom meeting early: She reported not feeling well (RSV) and had numerous extenuating life circumstances that co-workers were aware of and that she was trying to cope with. She later apologized for leaving the meeting. Without any accommodation or consideration of circumstances, this incident contributed to Alicia’s termination.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION, MEDIATION AND GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The following conflict resolution and mediation procedures are to be followed by management, programmers, staff members, and volunteers. For example management shall use these procedures in cases of proposed discipline, suspension, or termination for cause of programmers, staff members, or volunteers. Programmers, staff members, and volunteers shall use these procedures in cases of perceived inequitable work practices, seriously disruptive

behaviors, arbitrary management actions, or management's failure to follow procedures provided in this handbook. As an additional step, a grievance procedure is provided to permit programmers, employees, and volunteers to challenge adverse actions on the part of management by appeal to the Board of Directors.

Conflict Resolution: The first step of the conflict resolution procedure is to hold a discussion of the problem by the parties involved, clarifying points of disagreement and agreement, proposing solutions, and if possible, coming to a resolution. A third party may be included in the discussion by mutual agreement of the parties. In the case of a programmer, the third party would normally be the Programmers' Representative. A written record of the discussion shall be drafted and initialed by the parties.

Mediation: If the matter is not resolved by Conflict Resolution, a second meeting of the parties shall be held within 15 days, unless otherwise mutually agreed upon. This meeting will include but not be limited to: (1) a mutually agreed upon mediator, (2) the station manager, (3) the programmers' representative, if a programmer is involved, and (4) the parties involved. The contents of the meeting shall be documented in writing and shall include any decisions and/or intended actions by management. A copy shall be placed in appropriate personnel files and given to all parties.

Grievance Procedure: The grievance procedure may be initiated by programmers, staff members, and volunteers to appeal management decisions and actions resulting from the mediation meeting described above. Within 15 days from the date of the mediation meeting, the grievant shall present to the President of the Board of Directors a written statement of the grievance along with a copy of the meeting record of the mediation meeting. The President shall refer it to the Grievance Committee of the Board of Directors. The committee chair shall convene a meeting of the committee within 15 days of receipt of the grievance for the purpose of hearing said grievance. Said hearing will be scheduled at a time and date mutually agreeable to the parties involved.

Grievance hearings shall not be bound by judicial procedures. Detailed minutes of the hearing shall be kept and/or be recorded on magnetic tape. Records of this meeting shall remain with the committee in their confidential files. Grievance hearings are not open to the public. (But) The staff member, programmer, or volunteer requesting the hearing shall be present, as should other parties requested by the committee chair. A mutually agreed upon mediator should also be present. The aggrieved party may request that other parties be present at the hearing. Such requests should be honored by the committee chair. Failure of the aggrieved party to appear may result in dismissal of the grievance.

Within ten days of completion of the hearing, the committee chair shall prepare a written statement of the decision of the committee specifying the reasons supporting the decision. Copies shall be mailed to each member of the Board of Directors, management and the grievant.

The committee shall make its report at the next board meeting. The decision shall be final when ratified by a majority of the full Board. In the event that the decision is not ratified, the grievance shall come before the full board. This decision shall be binding on all parties. A copy of the decision shall be given the grievant and another copy placed in his/her personnel file. Management may suspend a grievant for cause during the grievance process but may not terminate the grievant until the process is completed and in accordance with the committee's findings and decision.

- **Reinstate Alicia and require that Marty and Dina participate in mediation**
- Include best practices non-profit employee rights for station policy and procedures. See below for examples from [Must Have Employee Policies for California Nonprofits](#)
- Include processes whereby members and supporters have input in major programming changes (programs, employee status) PRIOR to decisions
- Enforce management and board responsibilities inclusive of documentation/transparency
- Require that KZYX has a [Current Diversity Statement](#) with management and employees reflective of county representation and policies for Consequences for Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation; Reasonable Accommodations; and Leave Policies, including Paid Sick Leave

The Harmful Impact of Marty's Decision:

- Marty's decision caused harm against the community. Alicia's programming was making KZYX essential listening especially for local news, broader representation, and bilingual Spanish language access.
- Marty's decision can also cause station harm by alienating members resulting in withdrawal of support at a critical time during a move to a new station home.
- Marty's decision caused harm to listeners and has instilled distrust in the station.
- The BOD are also complicit and Board President, Dina acted punitively rather than follow KZYX grievance procedure guidelines after Alicia requested mediation about perceived hostile dynamics from Marty.
- Management has offered zero transparency (offering a "sounding board" is not transparency) and was disingenuous about facts during the Call In show. Marty during Call In inferred that mediation was initiated by Marty about 6 months ago. **It was not explicit that it was Alicia that requested mediation over 1.5 years ago and again prior to her termination.** Respect for confidentiality can be handled while still divulging the process for decision making and NOT being disingenuous let alone not factual about the chain of events.

As far as we know this was a personality conflict between a bad manager and an inspiring, creative, justice-oriented program director.

Just to be clear:

It was under Alicia's programming guidance that was instrumental in bringing information in Spanish, bilingual news, Pomo representation, community news, alternative perspectives, and faith that real issues that affect under-represented communities of Mendocino county.

In addition, as KZYX is focused more on employee transgressions rather than quality programming, start with the irresponsible and neglectful Management and Board:

The following documents required by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting but what are posted on the KZYX website are documents that are mostly outdated by **as many as 4 years**.

[Current IRS form 990 2018](#)

[Current Annual Financial Report 2018](#)

[Current KZYX Annual Audit 2018](#)

[Current Local Content and Services Report 2018](#)

[Current Diversity Statement](#) - **DOESN'T EXIST**

[Bylaws and Financial Statements](#)

[General Manager's Reports](#) - 2018

[MCPB Treasurer Reports](#) 2017

[Bylaws and Financial Statements](#)

[KZYX Mission Statement](#) - **undated, no revisions**

I hereby withdraw any future support to the station until Alicia's reinstatement and satisfactory remediation,

Laura Diamondstone

The following comments were received after the meeting because the commentor had technology challenges during the public comment period.

20) During the KZYYX zoom Board Meeting on Monday night I was anxious to respond. I tried to get on the public input list. Somehow I was not able to get on. Afterwards I realized that it was a blessing of a kind, since my initial reaction to the public response was somewhere between deep disappointment and outright rage. Having had a few days to think, I am in a better place to respond:

Once again, as with the MCN listserv, I heard people making assumptions, accusations and personal attacks entirely directed to Marty Durlin without, again, any real knowledge of what occurred that inspired the dismissal of Alicia. Did anyone notice that no one offered a defense, no board member, not Marty, no one from the public? To be fair there were a few statements of appreciation, followed by disappointment, anger and outrage. The reason is the system is designed to protect people (Alicia) and their (her) privacy. This is the appropriate and correct protocol. This is also designed to protect Admin staff as well.

Please remember that Marty hired Alicia, supported her, encouraged her and has acknowledged the good work she did on many levels, and when it became necessary, let her go. At the same time Marty guided the station through numerous fundraising campaigns, the search for a new location (because trees do continue to grow), and managed all the other huge responsibilities that have brought us to the place we were, before the firing of Alicia. Marty did not do this alone, of course.

To hear longtime programmers attack her made me furious, seemingly forgetful of the height of positive response, funds raised and general progress in programming, as if -- since Alicia was an important part of the progress -- now that she is gone, all this will disappear. Based on What? There is no reason to think that KZYYX will now abandon the Hispanic community, the Native American community, the emergency/fire/weather reports, etc, that people depend on and enjoy. Or perhaps they think they can go to The Coast, or The Skunk for this kind of programming. Don't know.

We have a wonderful, vibrant, powerful radio station. Let's all calm down and move forward. Please.

Sallie Brown

21) Due to technology failure I was unable to join the chat portion of the meeting. I hope this email can be included in today's minutes. I love KZYYX and consider it a gem in our community and I have the same regard for Alicia. However after attending this meeting it seems that the very issue most are concerned with, which is lack of transparency, may be due to legal restrictions. If so I fully support the board to do all they must to protect the radio station. This could very well have been not about in fighting or personality conflicts. I feel confident that this board is acting on behalf of the integrity of the station and support them fully to do so.

Sincerely Juanita-Joy Riddell