Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
Petition of Low Power FM	)	RM No. 11753
Advocacy Group	)	
	)	

To: The Commission

COMMENTS OF Jon Hall

I find the arguments of some of the defenders of big broadcasting to be perversely amusing. Some say that new entrants to radio broadcasting should buy a station as they once did. Firstly, radio frequencies were given out without any licensing fee from the government until the early 1990s so at least some of those represented never paid anything up front for their stations. Secondly, post the orgy of radio station collection caused by the 1995 revision of the Communications act there is very left to buy and where there is, the economy of scale completely shuts out most potential new broadcasters. Recently, I saw a radio news notice about one of the major broadcast operators buying out one of the 'smaller' major operators. The purchase involved 116 stations all sold in one sale. This was just a sort of matter of fact note and not something the least bit special, even! Very few people, even wealthy ones, can buy that many stations at once. In our area, there are two commercial operators of six to seven stations each plus one that is owned by a non-profit trust. On the non-commercial side, we have six stations most of which are NPR affiliated. We also have nine translators. It is possible to hear NPR on seven spots on the dial and several, mostly FM, local commercial stations may be heard on translators which are simply there to boost signal strength in areas of town that mostly already have good signals from the main channel. Many of these frankly provide little but duplicitous service. As to stations for sale? Save a group of seven stations that sold for several million dollars about five years ago, there has been nothing available until recently when the only daytime, suburban AM station came on the market.

About the only opportunity for those of us interested in radio broadcasting today are LPFM stations. These sub translator power stations in many cases provide original and fresh voices in their communities. Some provide the only local voices after the formerly local stations were moved through various means to the largest urban areas as is possible. This has left many areas underserved and with no other radio available save for a local LPFM station. To be on the board of one of these stations requires significant cost in that one is shut out from the ownership of any other broadcast facility whatsoever. The commitments that these little stations and there operators must make would cause a crescendo of shouts of 'grossly unfair' if applied in any way big commercial or non-com operators.

While translators may operate with as much as 250 Watts, LPFM stations are limited to 100 Watts with stricter buffer zones to other stations and translators. The advent of HD radio (and in case anyone doesn't know, HD is a trademark only and does NOT mean 'High Definition') and the ability of AM stations to use translators has created a ridiculous and unhealthy market for translators. The primary beneficiaries are those who already own 'full' and more often than not very high power AM and FM stations. Some high power FMs feed up to three 'fill in' translators which in some cases amount to the grant of Class A level radio stations for operators who frequently already own hundreds of radio stations. In the AM band, again, are many operators who use translators frequently with high power metro stations. It is amazing the greed with which many of these operators have in seemingly expecting to control every last drop of the radio spectrum. It is interesting to note that the total RF power granted to all LPFM stations combined is roughly the equivalent of just five Class B FM stations.

LPFM stations should be upgraded to translator power levels with 250 Watts at an antenna HAAT of 32 meters. It is only fair that this still minimal level of power be given to the uber local operators of LPFM radio stations. Some commentors in this proceeding seem to miss the fact that this would not be an automatic upgrade. Not all LPFM stations (including the one on which I am a board member) would meet the spacing requirements for an upgrade. No one would unduly have their signals impinged upon. 250 Watts would be the top LPFM power level. As with other broadcast services when a class wide upgrade is granted not everyone is eligible. Despite Class A FMs having their power level increased from 3 kW to 6 kW several years ago, there are still stations operating at lower powers as they could not meet the new spacing requirements.

Permanent status should be granted to LPFM stations. It is wrong for those with full power stations to be able to arbitrarily displace an LPFM station. As has been mentioned, these stations require extensive investment by their operators and their audiences. They also provide local service with local residents at their helm. They should have the same standing as full power stations in this regard. It would also seem reasonable to allow LPFM operators to own an additional LPFM station in rural and smaller markets.

The ability of each of these stations to own up to two translators should be changed with regard to where they are located as well. Presently, the translators would be required to 'touch' the 60 dBu contour of the LPFM station. This seems a wasteful requirement as a very good signal is often available a distance significantly past this contour. I am not sure that I understand any requirement in this regard unless somewhat similar requirements should be placed on other broadcast licensees. Still, something more in the order of the LPFM translators being required to be no more than 20-25 miles from the main transmitter site would not be unreasonable. This would represent more the reality of when the LPFM stations signal is fading and the translators signal is increasing with the actual signals 'touching' at about 10-12 miles from the LPFM transmitter and translator sites.

As to commercial status, I accept what we have been granted as non-commercial broadcasters. It would be an interesting idea to allow a small amount of commercial matter as is the case that

some countries allow their non-commercial broadcasters. Something on the order of four minutes per hour would not seem unreasonable. It would also be nice if a few minimal, specific 'calls to action' were allowed. Frankly, it is inefficient to say 'you may call' instead of simply 'call' a phone number. I am quite sure that this change would cause few switchboards to be flooded! I would also say that any changes in this regard should apply to all non-com operators and not just LPFM stations.

In closing, I would say that major commercial operators plus NPR and big religion already have been give an incredibly generous portion of our broadcast spectrum. It is only fair that local LPFM radio stations be granted the minimal respect of being afforded technically parity with translators, being granted permanent status, and having reasonable if minimal access to translators of their own. I do believe that it is poor stewardship not to allow the true public this level of access to our Nation's airwaves.

Respectfully submitted,

Jon Hall