

Office of General Counsel
Walter J. Harvey, General Counsel

SUBJECT: LITIGATION INVOLVING WLRN RADIO AND TV

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN: EFFECTIVE AND SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS PRACTICES

The School Board of Miami-Dade County is the licensee of several radio and television stations in South Florida and Noncommercial Educational stations licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that provide in-depth local news, investigative reporting, and national programming for National Public Radio.

The Miami-Dade School Board entrusted South Florida Public Media Group, Inc., once known as Friends of WLRN, Inc. (“Friends”), with millions of dollars, valuable donor lists, and the responsibility to fundraise, manage, and operate, one of South Florida’s most important public institutions, WLRN-TV and WLRN-FM (“WLRN”). Friends’ sole purpose, its written commitments, and its binding contracts all required that every dollar raised, and all funds, grants, and endowments held, be used exclusively to benefit WLRN.

Friends is a Florida not-for-profit corporation, formerly known for almost 50 years as Friends of WLRN, Inc., with its principal place of business in Miami-Dade County, Florida, located at 172 N.E. 15th Street, Miami, Florida 33132, in a building owned by, and adjacent to, the Miami-Dade School Board. On or about July 1, 2022, the School Board and Friends entered into a Management and Program Service Agreement (“MPSA”) which delineated Friend’s role in managing and operating the Stations owned by the School Board. The MPSA, which is still in effect today, further solidified Friends’ covenant to ensure that every dollar raised, and all funds, grants, and endowments held, be used exclusively to benefit WLRN.

On or about June 6, 2025, Friends, under its new name of South Florida Public Media Group, issued a press release announcing its plans to purchase and operate a new public radio station in West Palm Beach. Friends noted in its press release that its planned acquisition was awaiting FCC approval. On July 22, 2025, the General Counsel, with the assistance of outside counsel specializing in FCC matters, petitioned the FCC to deny Friends’ proposed acquisition of the West Palm Beach radio station. The Petition cited Friends’ lack of independent funding sources to purchase this new station and referenced the Board’s MPSA, which specifies that Friends’ donated funds and revenues generated by Friends are for WLRN’s exclusive benefit, in asserting that the funding statements Friends submitted to the FCC are false. In their subsequent response in opposition to the Petition, Friends argued that the FCC lacks jurisdiction over the Petition and that the matter should be resolved through the courts. The FCC’s approval of Friends’ purchase of the West Palm Beach radio station is still pending.

Good Cause
G-9

The School Board of Miami-Dade County oversees the largest school district in Florida, employing more than 34,400 employees. The Board's WLRN Radio and TV stations play an integral part of its communications network with the students and employees of the school district. The use of WLRN's funds by Friends to purchase another radio station in an area WLRN already transmits its signal into, constitutes a breach of the MPSA, Friends' contract with the School Board. The School Board has been materially harmed through the actions of Friends and its breach of the MPSA.

Accordingly, this item is presented by the General Counsel for the Board's consideration seeking authorization for the General Counsel to take all necessary and legal actions, including, but not limited to, the filing of a complaint against Friends in a court of competent jurisdiction, to ensure compliance with the MPSA and to protect the Board's interests and assets in its role as the licensee, owner, and operator of the WLRN Radio and TV stations.

This item does not appear on the published Agenda. There exists good cause to vary from the published Agenda in order to timely take appropriate legal action to protect the Board's interest with respect to the WLRN Radio and TV stations.

RECOMMENDED: That the School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize its General Counsel to retain outside legal counsel including, but not limited to, Mr. Roberto Martinez and colleagues of the law firm of Colson Hicks Eidson, P.A., to represent and file claim(s) on behalf of the Board in litigation to protect its assets in its role as the licensee, owner, and operator of the WLRN Radio and TV stations, and in any related matters, and to execute any necessary contracts to effectuate such legal representation.