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Proposal: A Community Radio Station in Salem

Vision. We envision an electronic town hall in Salem, Oregon, where real public discourse can occur. Items of interest to all sectors of the community will be featured. Conflicts of interest will be assiduously avoided, by design. For example, the charter will require that the governing board be a statistically accurate sample of the population in the coverage area of the radio station. Equal time requirements, required prior to the 1980's, will be adhered to. Finally, corruption by monetary forces will also be avoided by design as much as possible.

Motivation. The only newspaper of record in Salem consistently fails to report substantive discussions at City Council. Our city Mayor has had to send out e-mail on a regular basis in order to describe what really happened. He is now up to volume XX. This is an intolerable state of affairs.

We observe this happening elsewhere, on all scales. Only a handful of corporations control media now, with a corresponding loss in choice, in ideas, in real debate and discourse. More profitable content has moved into the center of attention. Sadly, public discourse doesn't sell. Still, it is the core lifeblood of true democracy. Hence the need for our station, which doesn't need to sell.

Technical Details. We think a station with a radius of 8.8 miles (1000 watts) will do. This happens to be the widest coverage available under the Low Power FM proposal being considered by the FCC. We plan to adhere to the most rigorous standards of non-interference with other stations. This includes checking related frequencies out to the sixth harmonic (two and a half octaves), touring the whole coverage area to look for possibly interfering signals, and using locking circuits to keep the signal from drifting.