



Fort Madison Listening Session Thursday March 12, 2015

The listening session was attended by 9 Tri States Public Radio Staff members and 8 members of the Fort Madison community.

The session was moderated by station manager, Jonathan Ahl. The session opened with a brief presentation on Tri States Public Radio and introductions of staff members present. After the station presentation the participants were asked a number of questions. A summary of the questions and answers is below.

What would you like to tell us about your community?

- 1) The community's rich history – participants felt that the Fort Madison community had a good base knowledge of history, but would like to see more attention given to the community's history, not only in the media, but in general.

Follow Up: What two things about Fort Madison history do you want people to know?

War of 1812 and its rail history

- 2) Fort Madison is more diverse than people realize. Fort Madison has Latino and Asian populations because of the railroad. Fort Madison has significant black history.

Follow up: What person, place or event best shows off the community's diversity?

Rodeo and Fiesta in the fall – Fiesta attendance is dwindling.

- 3) The prison "fiasco" (construction and opening delay) is not Fort Madison's fault; it is the state's fault. The community gets a bad reputation based upon the situation with the prison. Would like to see more optimistic things covered in news.

Follow Up: What's the number one thing to be optimistic about in Fort Madison?

Seimens (and related/offshoot businesses), Fertilizer Plant, small group developing trails and connectivity to improve wellness of community

What are the major issues facing you community?

- The old prison complex – what does Fort Madison do with this complex that was built before Iowa became a state?
- Need to keep the downtown business district alive and maintain the old buildings.
- Need a new bridge
- Don't want to be a home of so many vacant lots
- Dollar General was built on a historic site; there was little recognition of this
- Getting community to work as a whole, as opposed to faction working against each other
- Too much apathy in the community.

What can we do at TSPR to cover these issues better?

- In depth coverage of issues, much like the current series on the Dakota Pipeline the station is airing.
- Need to see TSPR more present in the community. A suggestion of signs or billboards was given, the consensus was it needed to be a visible presence.
- Connecting with the schools, using radio stories in the classroom
- Bring Storycorps booth to Fort Madison
- Fix the signal issues, make it more reliable in the Fort Madison area

Is TSPR meeting the cultural need of your community/how can we do better?

At the present time, yes, more than any other radio station.

Additional themes

Community members present appreciate having local public radio; they respect the TSPR news staff and feel TSPR brings the best news coverage to the area and that the coverage only improves with time.

People would like to share TSPR with their fellow community members. Participants felt public radio has a diverse audience, it isn't just for "nerds" nor is it as "snobby" as it used to be (as it may have been perceived in the past).

The overnight programming was discussed and opinions were expressed that undercurrents is a good addition for people who work at night to keep them awake and moving.

The financial stability of the station was discussed.