

KVIE anti-candidate postcard draws fire

By Edgar Sanchez
Bee Staff Writer

Public television station KVIE, Channel 6, has turned off some of its supporters with a postcard that endorses eight of 10 candidates for the KVIE board, while criticizing the other two.

The postcard cost about \$6,000 to produce and mail and was sent to 65,000 KVIE members earlier this week, station officials said.

It urges members to vote for the board's eight "chosen candidates," including four incumbents, and not to support Kaye Dunham and Dave Waling — who placed themselves on the ballot after the board refused to nominate them as candidates.

"Ten candidates are competing for eight positions on the KVIE Board of Directors," says the postcard, which is signed by board chairman James Willett. "All members of the board urge you to vote for the eight candidates indicated on this card . . . (to) help insure quality of service for the future.

"We believe the two petition candidates are conducting an aggressive campaign among members of their particular special interest group."

"Petition candidates" is a reference to Dunham and Waling, who became candidates through the petition process after the board's nominating committee rejected them.

When vacancies open up on the 25-member board, several board members act as a nominating committee. The committee interviews candidates before recommending those it deems the best. Nominees usually join the board unless they are challenged by petition candidates. When that occurs, an at-large election by the entire membership is required.

The station members are being asked to mail in their ballots before Sept. 18. In this election, only the top eight vote-getters will win office.

The four incumbents include Herbert S. Rodebaugh, Burnett Miller, Denise J. Mazzucca and Fern W. Waddell. Other candidates the postcard says have "strong financial and business skills, people who have been active in community affairs," include Jana L. Cuneo, Michael A. Miklaus, Richard S. Simonsen and Al Caples. Several

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people who received the postcard called The Bee to complain about it.

"I was surprised to get this," said Michelle Duran, 17, of Orangevale, who became a KVIE member more than a year ago. "I think it's very slanderous. It seems like the postcard is blackballing candidates. This is unfair, really unfair."

"This is a move to disenfranchise the members from being eligible to vote," said Brian Morris, 23, of Sacramento, moments after getting the postcard. "If KVIE paid \$6,000 for this, it should give an equal amount to Mr. Waling and Ms. Dunham to send out their own postcards."

"Frankly, I'm a little startled that they came out with this postcard," said Dunham, a teacher in the San Juan School District. "It's kind of surprising that I received one in the mail myself."

She said the nominating committee cited one key reason for rejecting both petition candidates. "In effect, they said we didn't know any millionaires" whom we could tap as KVIE donors, she said. "In essence, that's what they said."

Dunham added: "I don't know what on earth we're doing that seems to be so threatening to them."

Other callers to The Bee suggested it was wrong for KVIE to use public funds to castigate two public candidates. But Willett and KVIE President John Hershberger said KVIE had done nothing wrong. "There was nothing

illegal," Willett said. "The board had authorized the expenditure of funds for the purpose of supporting the candidates we endorsed."

"We felt these persons were more qualified. To remain silent would have been a disservice to those whom we encourage to seek nominations on the board."

When asked about the "special interests" allegations, Willett said it is his understanding that both Dunham and Waling are "active members" of the Dr. Who Fan Club — named for followers of "Dr. Who," a British science fiction shows that airs on Saturday nights on KVIE.

"It's a popular show," Willett said, adding he doesn't know much about the club or what it does.

Waling confirmed that he and Dunham belong to the club, but dismissed Willett's special interest allegations as fatuous. "Our belonging to the club has nothing to do with our goals for KVIE," he said.

"This postcard was in strict accordance with our by-laws," said Hershberger, who is not a board member. He said there was nothing wrong with the \$6,000 expenditure. "We've been very careful to be cooperative with Ms. Dunham and Mr. Waling, and to make sure that we're not in any way abridging their rights."

Hershberger said he, too, had received at least two public complaints about the postcard.

KVIE members donate money to the station every month to help keep it on the air. The monthly donations range from a few dollars to thousands.