



Director Report February 2018

Production & Programming

- As requested, I'll now lead with this category.
- Specker studio sessions: John Specker, the legendary local fiddle player who has performed 50+ recordings in our studio over the last few years, is taking up a weekly residency for the time being. To mix it up, we are creating different backgrounds for him and it would be great to occasionally bring in other players and/or a live studio audience. If anyone is interested, he is planning to be in the studio on Wednesdays starting at 1pm. Also, because we have such a large (and growing) collection of his songs, we are now giving weekly timeslots to his music (he is, after all, our most prolific producer, and winner of our "Producer of the Year" award).
- New grids- Speaking of timeslots, starting with this month, we are making some progress with publicity of our programming schedules. The weekly grids (which are updated each month) can be found on our TV Schedules page (okemovalley.tv/tv-schedules)
- Weston Playhouse- last month, Vincent, Ed, & I went to Weston Playhouse to shoot what is now being edited into a promotional video about the Playhouse's new Walker Farm facility. The video should be completed within the next week.
- LES video- Pre school teacher Lora Meile organized a "Walk to School" event, from the Village Green / gazebo to the school, which culminated in a "flash mob" style sing-along. This was in done as part of a statewide event coordinated by Let's Grow Kids, a Vermont childcare advocacy organization. Sharon Bixby and Paige Kelley shot video, and Lora is coming in to edit it with me this week. The video will be shown, with others from throughout the State, at an event at the State House next month.
- Coolidge Foundation- the staff was in to produce 2 short promotional videos recently. Also, Ed was at the Historic Site on Plymouth Notch to record the annual Presidents' Day events.
- Wellness Series- Springfield Medical Care Systems has launched a new series, produced in our studio. "The Wellness Series" is being released monthly (one episode per month) – the topics they have covered so far are: "Ladies First", "Walk with a Doc", and "Lifestyle Medicine".
- Town Meeting Day is Tuesday March 6th. We will be covering Andover's Town Meeting on Saturday 3/3, and then we have the 4 other meetings (Ludlow, Mt. Holly, Plymouth, Cavendish) all on Monday night the 5th... We will be working out the program schedule for each of them, but it's always a challenge because there is so short of a turn-around and we need to make sure they all play on Tuesday, so people can tune in before voting. I am not sure of the extent that is really done. Someday, it would be good to survey the community about or meeting coverage and evaluate how those resources are spent – perhaps we could be doing things differently, if people, for instance, aren't watching Town Meeting coverage on the day of Town Meeting before going to the polls. That said, this year will be business as usual. Vincent, Ed, & I will each be at one of the meetings on Monday night. Most likely, Ed will be in Cavendish, Vincent will be in Mt. Holly, and I will go where needed (either Plymouth or Ludlow). We will need 1 – 2 volunteers to help. Any takers? (you can even have your pick of location!)

Building & Technical

- Snow guard & rain gutters: As discussed last month, we received a proposal for installing 50' worth of snow guards on roof of the back of the building, to match the 100' on the front. The consensus from the Board was that we should submit the proposal, along with a letter to the Town. I will soon be receiving a new proposal, with the additional option of rain gutters. We can then submit the 2 different proposals
- Improvements have been made to the production of studio shows. We are now creating multiple camera backgrounds for the green screen – it's one of those things that's easier to show than tell. Suffice it to say it's

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opening up many possibilities for studio shows and enhances what we offer. (As an example of what we are doing with this new range of possibilities, see the note on John Specker above).

Outreach & Marketing

- Signs: I will be finalizing the specs (materials, size, location) for the proposed new roadside sign next week, with our sign maker, Steve Giroux. Those specs will then be used in our 2 applications (for the roadside sign and the smaller directional driveway sign), which we have to submit to the Town jointly with Black River Good Neighbors. As I previously explained, if the applications are found to not be in compliance with the zoning ordinance, we could then apply for a variance, and in which case, we would need to pay \$300 and go in front of the DRB (Development Review Board) to support our case. If that were how things proceed, we would likely be on the DRB's April 9 meeting agenda. Costs would be split with B.R. Good Neighbors
- With the school district merger re-vote in the past, it is now clear that Black River HS & MS will be closing, at least in its present public school form and barring any unforeseen changes. Even though BRHSMS has not been a highly active participant with us over the last couple of years, we have strong ties with the school and we owe our existence in large part to it. Aside from our shared history, the loss of the school does have an impact on our operations, particularly as we have sought to build on that relationship. All may not be lost, though, as there is an active group in Town seeking to establish an independent school and re-open the building as Black River Academy. If successful, they will need to come up with creative ways to attract prospective students. What better way, in the 21st Century, than to incorporate hands-on media education. Even better if there is a state-of-the-art facility on (or immediately next to) campus. I have been in communication with some of the individuals in the group, and I expect that those conversations will be developing over the coming months into something more meaningful. The closure of the school is a challenge- obviously not just for us, but the entire community. However, perhaps it can also be an opportunity. And perhaps we can even help.

Fundraising

- Beth Shrader is investigating our eligibility for larger federal grants. The HUD option (Community Development Block Grant) may be a stretch, as we previously learned, but she is looking further into the USDA Rural Development program as an option. We have also discussed focusing on the educational aspects of what we do, along with the technical, and searching for grant sources with those focuses.
- Memberships: We have added several new members over the past month: Sidehill Cronchers Snowmobile Club, Coolidge Foundation, Diane Kemble, Alan Isaacson, David Almond, Fred Marin & Lisha Klaiber, and Greg Epler-Wood. This brings our total to 13 members (9 individuals & 4 organizations) members for the year, generating \$865. This is approx. 1/3 of the way towards the target, and we are 2/3 through the year. If we are to make memberships a consistent and viable source of revenue, then would need to have approx. 2/3 raised by the end of each calendar year, leaving room
- Underwriting: I launched the 2018 campaign over the last few weeks. So far, we have a few committed underwriters: Heritage Family CU, The Book Nook, William Raveis / VT Properties, & Springfield Medical Care Systems, which will total \$1650. Our budget target is \$4000. The campaign needs to be a focus over the next month.
- I believe the general consensus was to hold the Kentucky Derby Gala again this year, which would make it the 7th one over an 8-year span (beginning in 2011). The Derby is Saturday, May 5th. We will need to get things moving if we want to do this – we can discuss during Wednesday's meeting.

Administrative / Organizational

- VTel: Regarding our request for HD channels, I have proposed that VTel replace the encoders that we currently have in our rack with a single 2-channel unit for approx. \$3500. VTel's Network Engineer & lead technical staff agrees this would be a reasonable way to go, but Gordon Matthews has remained silent (he is the Regulatory Affairs Manager who is responsible for our contract).
- VAN Legal Status & Fund: VAN has been granted its "motion to intervene" in the Comcast v Vermont US District Court case, which will soon be underway. This means that VAN will have "party status" in the case and therefore will be permitted to enter testimony. As expected, VAN has come to its membership and asked as to contribute towards the legal fund for this effort, broken out proportionate to each member's annual budget. Our portion is \$3324, paid out over 18 months. We just paid the first of these - \$1108, with the next one due in October.

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- By Laws Update: the By Law draft was revised after the review during last month's Board meeting. The new copy was emailed to Board members this week, for review in preparation of Wednesday's meeting. If the draft is finalized during Wednesday's meeting, a vote can be warned for any day at least 30 days out. I recommend holding the vote during the April Board meeting, since a March meeting would presumably take place on March 14th.
- Now that the By Laws have been updated (pending approval), we can move on to updating the Policies & Procedures. It would be great to have a Board member help with this; we have been fortunate to have Lou working on the By Laws with me.
- Looking ahead, the remaining Board meetings for the year (if sticking to the "2nd Wednesday" schedule) are: 3/14, 4/11, & 5/9. We need to pick a date for the Annual meeting, but I would suggest Weds. June 20th.