



Director Report May 2019

Production, Programming, & Training

- New in-house productions- During construction, the facility was operating under limited hours, during evenings and a few Saturdays. We took advantage of this opportunity to work on more-involved productions. This work included:
 - 1) recording an interview with the new Director of Weston Playhouse, Susanna Gellert by our very own Fra Devine. Fra & I went to the Playhouse's Walker Farm facility to record (a follow-up to our collaborative project with Weston about that Walker Farm facility last year, which received a Nor'Easter award from the Alliance for Community Media- Northeast region).
 - 2) Assisting Ludlow Fire Department with the completion of its promotional video (which has been airing extensively). We worked with Fran & Angela Kissell from the Fire Department, editing many nights during the month of March. They did a great job putting the story together, and are now motivated to do more.
 - 3) Completing the editing on the video about the Paleoindian excavation at Jackson Gore, featuring the University of Vermont Department of Consulting Archaeology and the State archaeologist, Jess Robinson. As I mentioned before, we had footage that we recorded during the original excavation in 2007, and then recorded a follow-up interview last Fall, about the findings from that excavation. It is great too have this project completed - everyone seemed pleased. It is a very good example of our collaborative work having an impact.
 - 4) Finishing edit of the fire prevention PSA from the Plymouth Volunteer Fire Department. Last Spring, we recorded an interview with firefighters Sue & Ali Poirier, after the forest fire near Hawk's Mountain Resort. The video was shelved for several months, but we were able to finish it in time for this Spring, which is the high fire danger season.
 - 5) Production of a short video on the Mount Holly School's winter sports program at Okemo Mountain Resort. If you haven't seen it, this video features the students XC skiing, downhill skiing, & snowboard, with interviews from the Principal (Craig Hutt Vater), the program coordinator (Becky Tobey), and Okemo's Director of P.R. (Bonnie MacPherson).
- Other Local productions- In addition to the above-listed programs that we have produced or helped produce, other new local productions over the last 2 months have included: Black River High School basketball games, softball & baseball games (all recorded by BRHS student Natasha Fortin), the BRHS Spring & Pops concerts (recorded by Sherri Geimer, Natasha's mother), a new weekly fishing series from local resident Zachary McNaughton ("Master Anglers"), a regular weekly series from RVTC's A/V Production class (taught by Zachary McNaughton), weekly church services from Ludlow Baptist, St. James Methodist, & Calvary Churches, regular government meetings, 2 episodes of FOLA Presents, 2 episodes of the "Chamber Update, "Ralph Pace's "Spotlight" interview with Susanna Gellert from Weston Playhouse, & short monthly promos from Cavendish Library
- Studio Usage- For the last 2 months, the studio has been inoperable and instead used for storage, as we've been either preparing for renovations, under renovations, or (now) putting everything back together our own interview. As such, regular studio productions (such as the Chamber Update, Spotlight, & FOLA Presents) have been move to different locations. We have been following up with others who have expressed interest in recording in the studio, to either arrange to record in another location or to hold off until we are set back up, which will be soon.
- Programming Data- Over the last 2 months, we have televised 337 different programs on our channels, 157

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of which were locally-produced. 264 of the 367 were "first-run" shows, while the remaining 103 were repeats (meaning they had debuted at some point prior to March 17, 2019). In addition, we televised 29 different short PSAs

- Video-on-Demand- The top viewed videos during the same 2-month period is "Paleoindian Excavation at Jackson Gore" (213 views), followed by Mount Holly School Winter Sports Program (63), & the April 25th Green Man. Unified School District Meeting (41).
- You Tube- Our most viewed video on You Tube over this same timespan has been the Fire Prevention PSA from the Plymouth Fire Department (151 views)
- After School programs- Eric continues to work with Mt. Holly's after school program on Thursdays. This has been a regular, ongoing collaboration for us for the past 2 years. It has been a success. We also ran a short weekly after school session in Cavendish. That one showed some promise, but it had its challenges and did not produce a finished product. If we could build that project into something more regular and achieve some level of consistency, we could produce some work of value. And then in Ludlow, BRHS senior Paige Kelley is back to doing a lip sync video project with the kids there. She produced one with them last year, when she was also working with us as a work-study student.

Equipment & Building

- Phase 3A- Wright Construction completed the work in late April. This included the walls, ceilings, insulation, electrical, HVAC, windows, & door frames for the studio control room, master control room, equipment & training room, and conference / classroom. They also primed the falls. It did not include the doors or flooring, although we were able to get flooring done for the master control room. I appreciated Wright's flexibility & willingness to install the flooring in master control, which saved us a lot of time & potential issues down the road. In total, this project has resulted in the largest improvement since the completion of the studio upgrades in 2015, and is the most noticeable difference we have made since we moved in 6 years ago (hard to believe it's been that long).
- Outstanding Work- There were some punch list items that needed to be addressed, which has mainly had to do with electrical work. There is an additional lighting feature getting installed in the conference / classroom, a light switch needs to be moved to a another wall in the equipment room, and the plug mold needs to be moved up slightly (also in the equipment room)
- Painting- We have been doing the painting little-by-little. We have stuck with the light yellow-is colors in the lobby and hallways. The studio control room was painted black. And for the rest of the spaces, we have gone with the color themes of the logo (lighter and darker greens). Quote a bit of patting remains - 3rd coats are needed in some areas, some touch up in others, and then all of the trim (window frames). Thanks to George, Lou, & Fra, for the help with painting.
- Getting Set-up- We are now in the process of getting everything into place, which in some cases involves producing new features, such as conduit & cables. This includes:
 - installing new conduit and making new cables for the studio control room rack.
 - re-wiring & organizing the master control racks
 - running new ethernet cables for the lobby and conference / classroom
 - installing the peg board for the equipment room ASAP.
 - installing workbench in equipment room
- Next Steps- I would like to get a building committee together early into the new fiscal year (once the new Board has convened), to establish a plan moving forward. We want to build on this momentum and get the remaining pieces done that were left out of this scope - mainly, we need flooring & doors, but we also need some additional HVAC work - venting / cooling the master control room
- Technical Problems- Whenever the master control equipment gets moved (as we had to do in preparation for the construction work and then again after it was completed), it is a monumental task. This is why it was good to get the flooring done in that room. Moreover, moving the equipment oftentimes causes problems. This time around we experienced problems with A) our VTel signal, which was resolved, B) a cable on a converter box to one of the digital signage ("bulletin board") servers, which is still being addressed & being hopefully resolved with a new cable that is being sent, and C) one of the hard drives on our new NAS (network attached storage) device, which resulted in data loss. That hard drive is being replaced under warranty, and the company is also

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providing data recovery service, also under warranty.

- Cable Damage- In addition to these issues, we have had some problems with our Comcast signals, which was the result of snow & ice damage to the cables on the outside of the buildings. Comcast had conduit installed on the exterior and is replacing the damaged cables. I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to replace the antiquated coax cables with fiber optic, which would drastically improve our signal quality on Comcast's system (more on that request below under "Administrative")

Fundraising

- Grant- We received the \$25,000 check from the State of VT Department of Buildings & General Services, which covered half of the total expense for Wright Construction's recent work. Thanks also to the Marro Trust and The Cricket Foundation, which provided supplemental grant funding for the project.
- Underwriting- Sharon has solicited underwriting support from Rotary Club and has offered to do the same from some of the other organizations with which she is involved. Despite having budgeted \$2550 in revenue, we did not operate an underwriting campaign this year, as done in previous years. At this point in the year, Sharon's approach is an effective way to make up for some of that shortfall.

Administrative / Organizational

- VAN Annual Meeting- I attended the Vermont Access Network annual meeting on May 3rd, which was held Northwest Access TV's new building in St. Albans. There was a lot of discussion about the larger looming issues affecting us all (Comcast v Vermont legal proceedings, the potential threats faced by the FCC ruling, the legislative efforts & the progress of the collaborative marketing efforts). There was a focus on the need for the marketing committee, legislative work group & VAN Board to work together more closely to carry out the collective needs of VAN (dissemination of key "talking points", videos & other marketing materials for awareness building).
- VAN Legislative work- The legislative workgroup, led by the lobby firm Action Circles, has announced that it was successful in getting the legislature to agree to a "Summer Study Session" to "The Committee shall consider changes to the State's cable franchising authority and develop for legislative consideration alternative regulatory and funding mechanisms to support public, educational, and government (PEG) access channels and services to communities across Vermont." The name of this committee is the PEG Access Study Committee.
- FCC Ruling- Regarding the FCC's proposed rule change on franchise fee funding, there is some new promising news that the cable company lobby is backing off from the idea of charging the value of the channels back to PEG providers, for which it had been previously pushing. This means that, should this ruling still pass (as it is expected to do), the "hit" on our funding will not be as drastic as it could have been. Still, we are being advised that it is still possible to see a 30-40% loss of franchise fee funding over a two-year period. The problem, as we prepare our FY20 budget, is that we still have no idea of the timing of the rule change.
- VAN Southern Regions Meet-Up- Over the last year or so, there have been numerous conversations among VAN members and the VAN Board related to collaborations, and pooling of resources. We helped facilitate some of these early discussions when we hosted a meeting among the SW & SE VAN regions in December 2017. I will be participating in a new meet-up group that came out of that, with colleagues around Southern Vermont, which is spearheaded by Cor Trowbridge of Brattleboro Community TV. The purpose of the group is brainstorm and explore ways in which we can help each other & plan for the future
- Comcast request- As previously reported, I have formally requested that Comcast replace the damaged coax cable with fiber, since it does not make much sense.. Sending our signals to Comcast over coaxial cables and coaxial modulators does not make much sense, since the equipment (especially the modulators) is outdated and not compliant with the rest of the signal processing equipment, which is all digital. Comcast's own equipment for which is receives our signal, in the Ludlow hub site as well as the larger head-end, Board election, is all digital as well. This means that we are converting our signal once on our end from digital to analog to send out the signals, and then they are converting them from analog back to digital. If you are a Comcast subscriber, a quick eye test of our channels, compared against the other channels on their system will show you the signal degradation. So far my request has not been addressed by Comcast.

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- Annual Meeting- The Board needs to set a date. I recommend looking at a day during the last week of June. We will need to start to get some marketing & invitations out. We can discuss whether or not to do an Open House type of event. At a minimum, we should include the annual awards reception.
- Board Election- The Nominating & Elections committee met last week to review the needs for the upcoming Board election. The recommendation for the election is to have it coincide with the annual meeting, as we've done in the past. We are currently soliciting candidates for the Board. We will have 2, possibly 3, seats to fill.
- Budget FY2020- I have put together the first drafts of 3 different versions of a budget for the coming year for discussion & your review.

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