



Director Report July / August 2023

Administrative

- Board Re-Organization: We now have a Board of 8 members. Welcome to Claire McKey Berkman, the newest addition to the Board. At the re-organizational meeting, the Board will need to elect Officers (President, VP, Secretary, & Treasurer). Committees will also need to be appointed. Board member “job” descriptions, officer descriptions, and committee descriptions are all available at <https://okemovalley.tv/board-directors>
- Financial Planning & Projections: We are 2 months into the new fiscal year (FY2024). September 30th marks the end of the 1st quarter. Things move fast. Budget reports and FY2023 year-end financial reports will be provided to the Board for review.
- Strategic Planning: The Board held a “kick off” retreat back in May, to start the process of developing a new strategic plan. Before that becomes ancient history and the details forgotten, we should debrief and develop some next steps in the process.
- PEG Funding: Our primary source of funding is the PEG Fee funding (aka “franchise fees”) which is the funding that the cable providers pay for PEG (Public, Educational, & Government) Access TV services. We contract with the cable providers to provide this service. Both Comcast & Vtel are obligated to provide these payments to us no more than 45 days after the end of each quarter. The most recent quarterly payments were due Aug. 15th. We received the one from Comcast, which was approx. \$43K, on par with our projections. We are still waiting for the VTel payment; it is not unusual for them to be late. Usually a reminder is necessary. I will be doing that this week.
- State Funding: For the third straight year, thanks to the advocacy work spearheaded by a team from Vermont Access Network (VAN), or statewide membership org., we are receiving an appropriation from the State budget. The amount (\$1m) is dispersed to VAN, and then it is up to VAN how that gets distributed. We were aware of this total amount when we passed this year’s budget, but our portion was just a guess, and we guessed wrong. We projected \$25K, but in fact we will be receiving \$45K, and it will come sometime in the next few months. I propose that we get the Finance Committee together to discuss & then make a recommendation to the Board as to how that extra \$20K should be allocated.
- VAN Advocacy Work: Moving forward, the VAN Advocacy team is now working on FY25 & beyond. At the outset several years ago, the impetus for the advocacy work was to raise awareness of our collective work across the state, as well as the cable-centric funding dilemma facing PEG, and to ask for State government’s support in helping to establish a new viable funding stream(s). The annual appropriations that we have been receiving over the last few years have been presented as “bridge funding”, as we lay the groundwork for a new paradigm. There have been successes along the way, which the advocacy team is building on. There is more work to be done, with the hope there will be some favorable new legislation that supports a new way of funding PEG.

- MOU with SAPA: The SAPA-TV Board of Directors has approved an MOU between our 2 organizations, outlining the nuanced path to collecting PEG Fees for the work that we are doing in Reading. It is nuanced due to the way cable TV is regulated through the State. In short, the designation of a PEG Access “AMO” (Access Management Organization, as we are defined by the Public Utility Commission) in any Town is at the discretion of the cable provider(s). We are already designated to serve Reading by VTel, but not by Comcast. Not that there are that many cable subscribers in Comcast, but there is far higher proportion of Comcast subscribers than VTel. And as we learned, Comcast is not willing / able to designate Reading to Okemo Valley TV due to the layout of their cable infrastructure. The only “AMO” it is willing to designate is SAPA. Our Board discussed this and decided to approach SAPA about coming up with a solution for serving Reading. The solution that is currently being proposed is for SAPA to seek the designation from Comcast, and then we split the PEG Fee funding 50/50. The MOU will be sent to the Board for review. Once adopted, we will work with SAPA on fulfilling the requirements associated with seeking that designation (collecting letters of support, etc.).
- PTO (Paid Time Off): I have recently returned from a 2-week vacation, where I used 11 of my PTO days, bringing my total to 13. With Labor Day coming up, that will make 14. I have assumed that we are keeping with the PTO allotment provided in recent years, where I had 33 total for the year. If we are keeping with this, then that means after Labor Day I will have 19 days remaining - 5 of which are holidays.
- Professional Development: We budget \$1000 or so every year for professional development. In recent years we have not used much of this. I have not done any professional development in quite some time. I would like to use a portion of this year’s budgeted amount to take a weeklong production-related workshop with Maine Media Workshops. I would ask for \$500 towards the total cost (which is in excess of \$2000). It is being held during the week of Oct. 9.
- Job Opening: We are seeking to hire for a part-time position that would handle program scheduling and occasional production work (mainly coverage of meetings & events). More info is on our website. This has been posted there (on the site), and has been distributed across the social media platforms. I am also spreading the news by word of mouth. Initially, Will was going to be resigning from his program scheduling position effective this week, but has now agreed to stay on longer, up until the end of the year if we need.

Equipment & Website Upgrades

- Master Control / Playback Server: The new playback server was finally installed & commissioned 2 weeks ago. We waited 2 months to get the appointment with the vendor, who had to handle the set up / “commissioning”. Unfortunately, that meant that the date scheduled was the day before I left on vacation. There were some minor hiccups that caused a delay with the set up, which were addressed by the vendor, but it meant that Rebekah needed to handle that with them (which she did flawlessly). Also, there were some problems getting the new system integrated with the video-on-demand (VOD) on our website, on which Rebekah worked with our website vendor to get corrected. It just meant that a lot of our VOD was down for a couple of days. The good news is that it is all working now, and better yet, our entire VOD library is back online, dating back to 2007, when we first started offering it on the website. That said,

there are still a couple of kinks to iron out on the integration with the website, which are being addressed.

- Website Upgrade: This project has been temporarily delayed, as other matters are addressed.

Community Engagement / Outreach / Production

- Social Media & Marketing Work: As of July, Abby Childs has taken over our social media management and is handling our weekly e-newsletters. We have been working on strategies for each platform and will next need to decide on what metrics we want to use to measure success. First, we need to outline some goals that we are trying to achieve. I think all messaging needs to be driven towards increased awareness & engagement. We would then need to define that that looks like, in terms of measurable outcomes. Each platform is different, with its own intended use & potential audience.
- New meeting coverage: We have begun covering the Ludlow Electric Board monthly meetings, adding to our regular repertoire. We took this one on by request, since there are some hot topics with a lot of public interest.
- Flood Recovery: Ever since the flood hit in July, we have been busy capturing as much information related to the emergency response, and then recovery, as possible. We have recorded updates from municipal officials, State & federal government officials (FEMA & the SBA), as well as local groups & non profits (Chamber of Commerce, Lake Rescue Association, Black River Action Team). All of this flood recovery-related programming be viewed on our website. Plus there is more to come!
- Lake Rescue Association: We were hired to provide AV services & to record the annual meeting, which ended up being largely dedicated to topics related to the flood recovery.
- Other New Productions: We have had lots of new programming, produced by a mix of staff & volunteers. Some in studio, but most out in the field. There has been steady activity in this area, which keeps us busy. Some of it has to do with all of the flood response activity that's been happening, but also, in general, we are just seeing more activity & interest.
- Supporting Friends in Need: Our friends Stefan & Wendy, who run Red Vault Productions, live on Depot Street in Proctorsville. Their home (which is also their office) was heavily damaged by the flood. We are providing Stefan with office space for the time being (the conference room) to do some editing work. He is mostly using it during "off hours", mainly in the evenings.

Fundraising

- Grant Opportunities: Rebecca Salem is working on a couple of new grant opportunities, as part of her consultant work for us. We have a quickly approaching deadline for one of them: the State of Vermont "Building Communities" grant (Sept 10th); we have received one of these grants in the past (and 2 from a related program, the VT Arts Council's "Community Facilities").
- Summer Membership Drive: Typically, we conduct our annual membership drive early in the fiscal year, during the Summer months. Due to the flood, this year is different. We need to re-evaluate and come up with a new plan for this year.