



Director Report January 2023

Administrative

- Comcast contract renewal: The contract has been signed and returned, as well as the “side letter” agreement related to the cable replacement and damaged cable work that needs be completed. This work includes replacing the analog (coax) cable with fiber optic and replacing old analog modulators in our rack with IP-based encoders. At long last, this means no more converting the Comcast signal from digital to analog (which they have then converted back to digital). It’s been a long-standing issue.
- VTEL CPG: I recently met over video conference with staff from Department of Public Service (DPS), in regard to VTEL’s renewal of a Certificate of Public Good. I have been acting as a point person for the PEG / Community Access organizations in VTEL’s service area. There is a regulatory process that calls for a Community Needs Assessment to be conducted. This is overseen by DPS. The DPS has hired a Chester-based contractor, Don Payne, to help conduct the Community Needs Assessment, by holding focus groups and a public hearing. I have been providing as much input as I can – the DPS views us as key players in this process, as we are the “boots on the ground”, and have the best understanding of the issues being evaluated. Right now, we need to be reaching out to our municipal, school, and non profit contacts in the VTEL Towns in our service area (Mount Holly, Plymouth, Andover).
- Help Wanted: We are looking for more part-time help. A Field Producer / Production Associate is needed. The position is posted on the homepage of our website and I will be distributing that elsewhere.
- FY2022 Annual Report was completed and submitted to the Department of Public Service, Public Utility Commission & cable operators. I also wrote a one-page summary, for submitting to the Towns, to include in their Annual Reports. Both the long-form and summary versions are posted to the website, in the reports archive. I will also provide copies to Board members.
- Strategic Planning Work: After a brief discussion during the December Board meeting about strategic planning, Newt took the initiative to set up a meeting to discuss some preliminary aspects, to help move this forward.
- Year-End Bonuses: Thank you to the Board for the in supporting & approving the bonuses for staff.
- Holiday Meet Up: We had an impromptu holiday meet up at The Killarney just before Christmas. We had all four of us staff there, as well as two volunteers (Ian & Pasha), and George & Newt from the Board.
- Fraud: At some point last month, I discovered that several checks that were mailed out as payments on November 1st never cleared our bank account. I reported the missing mail to the Ludlow PO, from where I had mailed them, and I issued new checks. I also reported this to M&T Bank, but did not decide to issue stop payments on the checks, since each one carried a hefty fee. On December 28th, one of those Nov 1st. checks did clear the bank – only it was altered, made out to a person in New Jersey for \$6,780 (it was originally \$50 to the Vermont Association of Chamber Executives – aka “VACE” – for our group dental insurance premium) . The next few weeks were problematic for our banking – luckily, over there wasn’t a lot that needed to go out at the time. It is now – finally – all sorted out. The account that was frauded was frozen and will now be closed – it is the same account we had since the beginning – it was opened with Chittenden Bank

in 2000, which was then bought by People's United, and now M&T. End of an era, I suppose (and what a way to end it!)

- Bookkeeping: As was previously mentioned, Wendell has taken over the monthly reconciliation work, which will save us money, and likely, less confusion over the long-run. We are planning to get a Finance Committee meeting together in the near future.

Community Engagement / Fundraising

- Underwriting Prospects & renewals: In the last month, we have added The Killarney and HWC Financial as underwriters for 2023. HWC is renewing; The Killarney had expressed interest in underwriting last year but never made it official. These two businesses join VT Properties / William Raevis and Marylou Scofield as 2023 underwriters.
- General Donation: We received a surprise donation at the end of the calendar year from Brian Michalski. I have reached out to thank him and to get more information. It is not often that we receive unsolicited surprise donations. It is very much appreciated.
- Membership: We had one new member over the past month. Thank you, Paula VanGuilder.
- Town appropriation requests – All appropriation requests were submitted to the Towns by the deadline. In addition to Ludlow, Plymouth, Cavendish, & Mount Holly, we are requesting a contribution from Andover. We will want to be prepared to have someone speak on our behalf about the request, from the floor during the Town Meeting. That is on Saturday March 4th.

Production / Programming / Tech Support

- Productions from Volunteers & Community Members– It's great to have all of the new programming from Pat Moore, including coverage of the weekly Innkeepers' ski races and the recent "Play Every Town" concert (featuring our very own George Thomson!). Zach McNaughton is back with a new season of his "Master Anglers" fishing series. We will also soon have a presentation about a long-standing local farm (Smith Maple Crest Farm), which is kicking off the newly-rebooted "Third Thursday" program at the Fletcher Memorial Library in Ludlow – thanks to volunteer Becky Wynne & her son Henry for volunteering to cover that.
- Legislative Updates: With the new legislative session now in full swing, I have been reaching out to local legislators, inviting them to record segments. Tesha Bus, the newly-elected State Rep, for the Woodstock-Plymouth-Reading House District has taken me up on it (as a side note, she is also a former Board member of Okemo Valley TV). We have been recording short segments weekly. Starting next week, the senior staff writer from the Vermont Standard will be hosting & handling the interviewing. This is a good partnership for us to have, building on the candidate forum we partnered on in our studio back in October. I have also reached out to the Chester Telegraph about doing something similar with candidates in the Districts we share with them. So far no word on that. And on the Senate side, Becca White is interested in recording regular updates. I would also like to record an interview with Ludlow's Alice Nitka, who has just ended a long tenure in the VT legislature, and whose Senate seat Becca White has filled.
- Town Meeting Coverage: It is looking as if there will be 4 Town Meetings for us to cover, simultaneously, on Monday March 6th and one (Andover) on Saturday March 4th. Historically, it had been the case that there were those 4 on Monday night, the eve of Town Meeting Day. It was always a stretch, but we pulled it off (not always perfectly). But over the last couple of years, with hybrid meetings, it has not been feasible to do 4 at once. However, it seems as if this year that's what is happening. We are starting to put together a plan - if we can get 2 or 3 volunteers that night, we should be fine as far as coverage. It is the post-production and getting all of those meetings turned over quickly

later that night & “on the air” that is going to be the biggest challenge. So, we need to be planning for that now.

Facility / Building Improvements

- Building Committee: I engaged with the committee members to discuss the long-harbored “wish list” for exterior building projects, and how to best proceed with the Town, following up on our requests. We now have a spreadsheet detailing the punch list of items, organized by priority. It was sent to the Town Manager, Scott Murphy, as a follow-up to on & off conversations we have had over the past few years. I also sent an email to Selectboard members to A) thank them for going on the record supporting a larger financial request from Okemo Valley TV and B) to make them aware of the building needs.
- Plumbing: I made one other request to the Town, for some plumbing work, which came from our cleaning service provider, Joe Elwell (Paradise Cleaners). He would like a hot water faucet in the mechanical closet, which makes a lot of sense. We only have ever had access to a high pressure cold water valve to fill mop buckets. Scott Murphy addressed this request right away and has contracted with a plumber. It should be completed in the near future. This will be a significant improvement as far as cleaning goes, especially in the Winter.