



Director Report June 2023

Administrative

- Board Election: The Nominating & Elections Committee met & recommended keeping the number Board seats at 9, which is how many there are currently. As it currently stands, the Board can be anywhere from 5 to 13 members; I recommend reviewing and revising the By Laws in the coming year to solidify this process. In keeping the number at 9 for FY24, this means with the 2 terms ending (John & Pat), there are 2 seats to elect this year. So far, we only have 1 candidate (neither John nor Pat is seeking another term). The nomination period was set to end today (June 13th). I recommend doing some more recruitment in the coming days. Once we have a ballot set, voting will take place electronically (using Survey Monkey), and be open until a set time during the Annual Meeting. Those in attendance at the Annual Meeting will have the opportunity to vote.
- Annual Meeting Planning: Our Annual Meeting & Open House is Tuesday, June 20th starting at 6PM. We need to spend some time during the June 13th Board meeting to work out the details. We have 2 10x10 pop-up tents that could be set up and I will be getting a new picnic table to replace the one that was destroyed. It would be great if we could have the event outside, with the alternate option of the studio in inclement weather. The format will be an open house with light refreshments starting at 6:00, with a brief ceremony for the producer awards to follow. The business meeting would then follow that, during which time the election & other necessary business will take place.
- VAN Annual Meeting: The Vermont Access Network, our statewide membership org. held annual meeting May 5 in Rutland, hosted by PEGTV (aka Rutland Regional Community TV). Peter & Rebekah attended from Okemo Valley TV.
- VTEL: The Certificate of Public Good (CPG) renewal proceedings ended in May. There has been no decision nor announcement made yet, but I expect that it will not be long. You can find all information related to the case is on the PUC website here: <https://epuc.vermont.gov/?q=node/64/172854/FV-Case%20Summary-Portal>
- Comcast: Our new contract is executed & in place. As for the upgrade to the HD channels, the fiber optic cable has been run into our building and we now await the rest of the hardware. I am told this will take place sometime between September – December.
- American Broadband Deployment Act: A bill has been drafted in the US House ([HR 3557](#)), which, as it relates to us - in the most basic terms - seeks to de-regulate the existing cable franchising laws and remove the public interest obligations placed on cable providers by local franchising authorities. From what I understand at the moment, it is a highly partisan bill – exclusively sponsored & co-sponsored by House Republicans – and is not expected to garner the support it would in the Senate. Even so, since the stakes would be high if the unlikely happened and the bill passed (it would strip all cable-related funding for PEG Access), it is being closely monitored by our national membership organization, Alliance for Community Media, as well as VAN (Vermont Access Network).
- Investments: For our first month with the Fidelity investment account (May), we earned \$232 in interest – not bad! I did hear this morning on the news that there are now some savings

accounts with higher yield (up to 5%) interest rates. It may be worth some research & consideration.

- Credit Card: During the April meeting, the Board approved requesting a credit card limit increase from our current \$2,500 to \$10,000. Our credit card is with M&T Bank; as per the bank's policies, before we apply, we need to provide approved Board meeting minutes indicating this. So, we need to present the approved April meeting minutes (I don't recall if this has happened). Then the wheels can finally be in motion.
- Paid Time Off: With our respective vacation time, and the recent holiday, Rebekah & I have each taken our PTO days for the year (ending June 30th). So we are ready to move onto FY24 with a clean slate.
- Strategic Planning: We should de-brief the "kick off" retreat that was held. From my perspective, it was really nice to have many of us together in a nice setting, outside of our studio (thanks, George), and to openly & informally converse, brainstorm, etc. We now need to determine the next steps in the process, timeline, and expected outcomes. I think it is best to "strike when the iron is hot", so we should be doing the next session in the not-distant future, in order to harness some of the momentum & while these ideas are still fresh.
- MOU with SAPA: The SAPA-TV Board of Directors has been sent the draft MOU, re: our proposed partnership on the designation of the Town of Reading as it pertains to Comcast. I have been informed by SAPA Director Johnny Gifford that they are supportive but want to consider it more closely.

Equipment & Website Upgrades

- Master Control / Playback Server: The new master control server has been purchased but is not yet installed. I need an open day with nothing else on the docket so I can focus on it. It will be soon!
- Website Upgrade: It's been slow getting things in motion, but once I have more details, I will share them. At the moment, I am in talks with just the one vendor ([Localeyz](#)).

Community Engagement / Outreach / Production

- Town AV systems: Two of the 3 systems that were installed are full functional and in use (Mount Holly & Plymouth). In the case of Plymouth, however, I had to disassemble the system and place most of it in storage as the Town Office is under renovation for the next 4 – 6 months. For both Mount Holly & Plymouth, re-imbursements for the expenses we have paid into each of these systems is forthcoming, hopefully before June 30th, in time to be reflected in this year's (FY23) budget. The Town of Plymouth also invited us to bill for the disassembly & moving help. In Ludlow, we are still working on getting the fixes and rest of the needed work addressed. I have continued to manage that project, and have been in talks with vendors, while trying to nudge things along but it's been going slowly.
- Meeting Coverage: With the increased workload in Reading, we are now providing coverage for 18 – 20 local gov. meetings on average per month. And on top of that, we remotely record an average of 3 school board meeting per month. We receive recordings of another 3 school board meetings from other sources each month. Meeting coverage is certainly a large part of what we do, and increasingly so. But perhaps more importantly, the value of that service has increased. Due to many of these meetings being held in a hybrid format, whereby we provide the support – and in some cases the video conferencing access through our Zoom accounts – we are being heavily relied on. Concurrently, we are seeing more participation from community members in Town governance; this is due in large part because of the "hot button" issues at

hand, but I also believe the service we provide is fostering this increased engagement and access. And I'm not alone - I have received numerous anecdotal pieces of feedback from municipal officials and community members supporting this hypothesis.

- Studio Uptick: There has been an increase in use of our studio lately, which has been great, and a trend that we need to support.
- Graduation Coverage: We have provided coverage (or will be) for 4 elementary (6th grade) graduations – in Cavendish, Ludlow, Chester-Andover, & Mount Holly. We provided equipment & support for a volunteer who covered the EXBR graduation and this coming Friday night (the 16th), we will be teaming up once again with SAPA-TV on a collaborative production of the Green Mountain Union HS graduation. We have received the Woodstock Union HS graduation from Woodstock Community TV and hope to be receiving the Mill River Union HS graduation from Rutland PEGTV. We also covered Senior Awards Night at Green Mountain.
- Social Media & Marketing Work: The Finance Committee has proposed getting cost estimates to factor into the FY24 budget for outsourcing our social media and e-news work. In May I met with Abby Childs, who works with Noah on his business, Open Door Vacation Rentals, and also their side project, Unofficial Okemo, which in a short period of time has generated a high level of engagement & interest. I was impressed in talking with her & seeing her work and think she would be a good fit to take this on for us. The draft budget you have seen for FY24 reflects the costs included in her proposal. It translates to about 16 hours per month and includes content creation & posting across our social media platforms, weekly e-news, and maintaining a calendar for content & posting.

Fundraising

- Outsourcing Grant Work: Searching for grant opportunities and writing grant applications are ongoing goals, as we have been striving for years to ultimately be able to complete the building, as intended. Outsourcing this work is something that the Finance Committee discussed – my task is to get cost estimates for the work. We have worked in the past with a couple of different grant writers, the most recent of which was Rebecca Salem in 2017-18. I recently talked with her – she is interested; we discussed workflow and pricing. Wendell mentioned another option for us as well. We want to get the cost estimates into the budget for FY24.
- Grant Opportunities: There are some for the building & energy efficiency. With the uptick in usage - we are back to our “normal” pre-COVID levels – the limitations with our space are as noticeable as ever. The acoustic distractions are many, and the energy inefficiencies are noticeable. The other area for us to explore is with the classroom / conference room, which I would like to build out to be a room for hybrid digital media workshops & classes.

Buildings & Grounds

- Sign: There is a new chapter of VMBA (Vermont Mountain Bike Association) for Ludlow – Ludlow Area Sports Trails (LAST). The objective is to create trail networks for a variety of recreation – while the primary focus is on mt. biking, the trails will also be open for walking, trail running, snowshoeing, & cross country skiing. The first trail network is being built just out our back door – the “Back 40”, which is now Town-owned property (formerly owned by BR High School). The site is going to become a hub and community gathering / parking area for those using the trails. LAST has requested to put a sign attached to our roadside sign (we own the sign with Black River Good Neighbors). I have been talking with LAST Board member Hannah Farrow about this – the question is whether to hang it at the bottom or attach it to the side post. This will be a Board-level decision, as there are different factors to consider.

- Shed: Peter & I worked on securing the shed roof better (the wind had torn the metal roofing in places and during high winds, was causing it to bang around, which is a noise disturbance for us & our neighbors). The next step needs to be to install posts, at least on the North-facing side, which is the problem area. I hope to get to this in the Summer or early Fall when time allows. On another shed note, the Town Recreation Director, Nick Meile, has asked me about using it to store overflow items, as he is running out of space, although it's unclear how much space he needs.
- Professional Development: Questions always come up about copyright - what can and can't be shown on non-commercial and PEG Access TV channels vs online. What kinds of materials can be used and how, vs. what is forbidden? Rutland PEGTV recently hosted and sponsored a presentation by a copyright attorney to address some of these questions. Peter attended and came back with some great info. It was held as a luncheon at no cost, which was very generous. Also, the Northeast region of the Alliance for Community Media (our national membership org.) is having its annual conference at the end of this month in NYC (Brooklyn). With everything that's been going on, this was a bit off my radar, so I did not do anything about it. I cannot attend, but if one of our other staff members can, I think it would be a great use of our Professional Development dollars, which this year have been unspent (we budgeted \$1000).

37C Main St., Ludlow, VT 05149