



Director Report: March 2021

Production & Programming

- Green Mountain HS Basketball: We have continued to stream & broadcast the home games, with the last one being this Wednesday – it's the boys' Division III semi-final game (the finals will be played in Barre). It's been quite a bit of extra work, but it has raised quite a bit of awareness for the station, and we've received many positive comments and notes of appreciation. Having the same camera operator throughout has been very helpful, to keep things running smoothly. So, thank you to Norm Merrill for volunteering to do that. Sarah Devereux (who is now working for us part time) has been on hand for several of the games to help me with set up and monitoring the stream.
- Town Meeting: Town Meeting coverage went well. We produced two "hybrid" meetings (Mt. Holly & Andover) and three remote ones over Zoom (Cavendish Town Meeting, Ludlow Town Meeting, & Ludlow Village Annual Meeting). We have one more to do: the Plymouth Town Meeting will be Monday April 12th, held as a hybrid.
- Mount Holly Mammoth: Eric recently recorded a presentation over Zoom with Nathaniel Kitchel, one of the researchers from Dartmouth College who is studying the mammoth remains, using radiocarbon dating technology (and which recently has been getting a lot of press attention). The plan is to involve the Mount Holly Community Historical Museum, which first brought it to our attention. Thanks to Pat Moore for providing video footage of the field day in January. That will come in handy.
- Jim Hasson Parade: We received a last minute request for coverage of a parade for Jim Hasson's 95th birthday earlier this month. Thanks to Noah for jumping into action to do this. The result was a nice 3-minute feel-good community video, which is a welcomed addition these days.
- Myanmar Commentary: Last month, I helped Robin Timko produce a commentary about the ongoing crisis in Myanmar, which included a discussion with her son, who works for UNICEF and was stationed there for several years until recently. Sharon Huntley wrote a nice column about it in the Vermont Journal, which brought some attention to the show.
- Sammy Blanchette in studio: Eric scheduled a recording date (March 31st) with local musician Sammy Blanchette, to record in our studio. The idea is that, if all goes well, Sammy may then do a virtual concert (such as we've done with Susan Haefner).

Outreach & Marketing / Fundraising

- E-News: The program highlight newsletters have been getting emailed out to our list weekly, usually on Fridays or Saturdays, highlighting a handful of new programs that we will be televising over the coming week. We've been doing this for the last 4 months, and the engagement level has been good. Next step is still to get an abbreviated text-only version to submit to the local weekly papers.
- Mill River Union HS: Recently, I had a conversation with Assistant Superintendent Brian Hill, to tell him more about us and what types of services we could provide to the school district. He was pleased to have made the connection and said he would help spread the word around the high

school.

- Town of Reading: Some in roads have been made with outreach, and we will begin receiving the recordings of Selectboard meetings. They are already being recorded by a volunteer in Town
- Memberships: No new memberships since last month, but this is something to continue promoting in different ways.
- Underwriting: Sharon, Noah, & I met last week to discuss revamping the underwriting program, to include new tiers of targeted business sponsorships. Sharon drafted a brochure to get the conversation started. There will be a summary of that discussion during committee reports.

New Equipment & Upgrades

- Internet: We now have high speed fiber optic internet service at our location, which meets any current & future demands of our operations. As was mentioned last month, the offer from VTel was their top-level service (1 Gbps business-class service) at a discounted rate of \$250/ month, over a 3-year contract. So far it has been great. Having its infrastructure in place positions us well for any potential future partnerships and paves the way for many different possibilities. One of these examples is the "VIT 2.0" concept that has been floating around at the State level (VIT – Vermont Interactive Television – served State agencies, colleges, businesses, & non profits for many years before its funding was cut off approx. 5 years ago).
- Improvements with Live Production Equipment: After hitting a couple of technical glitches with HDMI equipment, I decided to change over our live streaming video transmission to SDI, which is a more reliable and solid interface than HDMI cables and connectors. This resulted in the purchase of a new monitor / recorder and a converter for a total cost of approximately \$500. It was money well spent, as I witnessed the improvements right away.
- Laptop Damage: Last week, as I was packing up equipment, a bag carrying the MacBook Pro laptop tipped over and out came the laptop onto the concrete floor, causing damage to the screen. I am waiting to hear back from Ludlow Insurance Agency about the possibility of filing a claim. It may be worthwhile to do so. We have a \$500 deductible on equipment.
- Dell Computers DOA: As reported several months ago, I secured discounted equipment from Dell computers, and have made 2 significant purchases. The first purchase was for a rack-mounted desktop computer for our studio control room and a laptop. Both computers arrived damaged. The laptop has since been replaced and the desktop is currently being serviced. (due to the increased streaming and remote work, I purchased a 2nd laptop from Dell, through the same discount).

Administrative

- PEG Funding Study: There are a lot of moving parts related to how the Funding Study report is working its way through the legislature. We do not expect action during this session, but some results may come out of the relief package funding coming into the State earmarked for broadband. That is still to be determined, and some of that is hinging on work that is coming out of the new COVID Response Telecom Plan, produced by the Center for Rural Innovation (Matt Dunne's group), and which promotes PEG as a broadband-based community resource. In any case, what matters now is that we all understand the crux of the Funding Study and its core recommendations, and why it is important. The challenge is that it can be confusing to understand, because of all of the elements, regulatory language, inside-industry jargon, and evolutionary changes. It's a lot for those of us who live & breathe it daily, which makes it even more important to break it down as simply as possible for everyone else. There is a very helpful document outlining the critical talking points. I believe I circulated this last month, but I will send it via email, just in case.
- Regional Collaboration: With all of the staff turn-over that has and continues to take place with our

neighboring colleagues, the reconvening of the strategic discussions has been slow, but I am working on it. I would like to pick up where we left off last Spring, discussing the potential of a shared underwriting campaign. At some point, if and when these conversations gain meaningful traction, it will be useful to have Board representation.