



Director Report May 2020

Production, Programming, & Training

- We are now 2 months into this “new normal” of (mostly) working and producing remotely. There are challenges, but overall we have transitioned well. I have been going into the station once per week for the last few weeks and will increase this little-by-little. We are allowing people to come in, one-at-a-time, with social distancing guidelines in practice, to record in the studio and borrow equipment. Today I recorded a short promo with Cavendish Librarian Kata Welch. For the most part though, with so much of the recordings and other production work happening remotely (largely over Zoom), for the time being, there is not a need for us to be at the station regularly, and certainly not all at the same time. There is so much uncertainty regarding what the future will look like, generally speaking, that will just need to be flexible and ready to adapt.
- Program Stats: Over the last 30 days, since April 14th, we have televised a total of 236 programs over both of our channels. Of these 80 were “first run” (aka new). Of the 80 new programs, 26 were ones that we produced or were generated through our station (government meetings, church services, an SBA presentation with the Chamber of Commerce, composting workshop, Linda Thomson’s children story readings, and short videos from prolific community producer Pat Moore). There were also 9 new short interstitials (promos & PSAs), 2 of which were local productions (Cavendish Library & a COVID-19 prevention PSA from Jamie Ward). We had a larger volume of shows this month because of the all of the Governor’s COVID-19 update press conferences (3x / week) and Senate President Tim Ashe’s daily (Mon. – Fri.) updates. In addition, we are carrying many legislative meetings, as well as a virtual learning series from Fairbanks Museum. The Governor, Sen. Ashe, and Fairbanks Museum all have dedicated time slots each day on our Gov. / Ed. Channel. Having regularly-scheduled relevant programming is something that is easy to promote. It would be very useful to know what kind of value this is having – are people watching (see “Survey”, under Outreach & Marketing).
- The program that we televised the most during this period was a Green Mountain Unified School District meeting from April 16th, which ran 32 times, followed by the April Mt. Holly Planning Commission meeting (28 times), and then Pat & Penny’s New Zealand travel video (17 times).
- Video on Demand (website): There has not been much activity over the past month, in terms of viewing videos. I believe this all goes back to the marketing & publicity. This is noteworthy and something to discuss.
- You Tube: This is where the action has been. There have been over 3,500 views of videos on our channel over the last 30 days. A vast majority of these have been the COVID-19-related children’s book readings from Linda Thomson. (So the numbers are a little misleading – there is a national audience for those videos and she did a great job getting them out there & publicizing them). She has had many hundreds of views on each video. And then there is the usual old John Specker video that continues to get watched a lot. That one had 245 views over the last 30 days, and then it falls off drastically from there.

- We have some new workflows in place that will hopefully allow for us to get the scheduling our further in advance, in order to meet the requirements for the interactive program guide (to which we now have access, more on that later). Using a Google document, I am doing some long-range planning of programs, which enables Fred to focus his time on the daily build-out of the schedules. So far this has worked out, but a lot of that has to do with us working remotely. It will be interesting to see how well this can get streamlined once we get back to our “normal” operations
- Zoom: We continue to use Zoom for most productions at this point. We are hosting the government meetings in Cavendish, Ludlow & Mt. Holly. (Andover hosts its own meetings on Zoom and sends us the recordings as do the school boards; the Town of Plymouth continues to meet in person; we have been skipping those but will likely pick them back up in June). Aside from meetings, I have used Zoom to record Chamber / SBA presentations, a legislative update from our Windsor District senators, and a “Spotlight” show from Ralph Pace. Starting next week, I will be hosting / recording a music variety show with local musician (as well as karaoke DJ & trivia night maestro) Rick Davis. It is supposed to be happening weekly on Wednesday nights at 7pm. It will stream live on You Tube and we will record it for later playback.
- Constitution Project: It has been challenging to get this edit finished – each week is full of so much other work that “extracurricular” projects end up on the back burner. That said, just recently Eric was able to get to this and take it (almost) to the finish line. I now need to do a few things with it – we should have it done for good before the annual meeting in June. Perhaps we can promote it then.
- Susan Haefner Concert: In a collaboration with FOLA, we are co-producing a concert with local singer & actress Susan Haefner. It will premiere on our You Tube channel (which we will also broadcast live on TV) on Saturday May 30th at 7pm. This project was decided upon as a replacement for Susan’s scheduled live FOLA concert on the same night. Susan will be live on the You Tube channel live chatting with viewers (I imagine the audience will be much larger on You Tube than it would be on TV, but we will still televise it). FOLA has made a \$250 contribution to us for this.

Outreach & Marketing

- Facebook Page: This is still a problem. Limits are still in place, meaning we do not show up in people’s feeds. Still no resolution nor response from them.
- Postcard Advertisement: I am still waiting on the USPS to process our application and get us set up with the non profit bulk mailing rate. I asked at the Ludlow PO and was told that they mailed it out for us on March 31st but it wasn’t received (in NYC) until May 5th. I was told it should go quickly from here on out (fingers crossed). This all could have been handled electronically, which I did not find out until just recently.
- Program Guide: We have now begun submitting our schedules to Gracenote (the interactive program guide vendor) – our schedules should now be displayed on the interactive program guides on both Comcast and VTel. This is a work-in-progress, but we have made great strides.
- End of School / Closing of Black River: I am in discussions with Black River HS about producing a virtual graduation ceremony this year. As you know, this is a special year (pandemic aside) with the high school is closing. I have also offered to help create a tribute video - I’m looking for interested people to help with that. There is some overlap with a new project on which we are partnering with BRAM (below)
- BRAM Collaboration: We have been invited to participate as a partner in a community project being

5/13/2020

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spearheaded by Black River Academy Museum – community members are being asked to contribute contents related to the pandemic (artifacts, photographs, comments, video recordings, & any other media). There are a lot of possibilities. I have offered our media-making services, as well as technical support. Details are still being ironed out – more to come.

- Survey: We have transitioned. We have new systems in place, to better streamline program offerings prioritizing local programming. We are publicizing this programming more. We have been reaching out, working on new projects, while offering to do more. But what impact is it having? Certainly, there is value to those who are using us (the small handful of local producers, the Towns, elected officials, Ludlow Baptist Church, and a few others). But what about the community as a whole? Do we have value? Judging from the data available on online viewership, local engagement is really low. We only have metrics available to us for online viewership, so it would be useful to do another viewership survey, similar to what we did last year but with (hopefully) many more responses.

Administrative / Financial

- Collaboration Discussion: The discussion with neighboring colleagues in the Southeastern region (CATV, Woodstock Community TV, & SAPA) is ongoing. I get the sense that there is building interest throughout the State in considering similar steps of collaboration, and even possibly consolidation or mergers.
- Channel Change: The transition of our Comcast channels to 1076 & 1086 is completed. You will now find our Community (aka "Public) Channel, which is the old channel 8, on 1076 and the Education / Government channel (the old channel 10) on 1086. The old channels will go dark on Comcast at the end of this month.
- Budget Work: Considering the variety of factors (pandemic, "cord cutting", FCC rule change) budgeting for FY21 is challenging, to say the least. So far, I have been working on a draft taking the actuals from this year and making small adjustments, but we may want to look at different options. We could proceed with passing a budget based on this year's actuals, while realizing that we will likely need to make adjustments to it during the course of the year. We could also follow the State's lead and do a series of 3-month budgets. Food for thought.
- Board Election: There needs to be a discussion on this but I suggest we look into allowing for electronic voting for the election this year. This is something we have talked about doing in past years, and what better year to try it out?
- Virtual Annual Meeting: I propose an annual meeting & awards night (over Zoom) on Thursday, June 25th. Will this work for everyone?
- Legislative Work: S.318 (the "PEG Access Funding" bill) is being considered right now by Senate Appropriations. Alice Nitka & Dick McCormack are both on this committee. Follow-ups needed.
- Digital Divide / Broadband Funds: One thing that the pandemic has shined a light on is the digital divide. Things like remote work, tele health, & distance learning are here to stay in some form, and will likely only grow in years to come. This new world works well for those with the equipment and high speed internet connections at home, but for those without, they are being left behind. There are opportunities out there for us to get involved. We need to carve out the time to give consideration as to what role we can play to help bridge the divide. This very much ties into the legislative item above.