



Director Report: May 2021

Administrative & Financial

- Don: When working at the Mount Holly Selectboard meeting on Monday night, I learned that Don passed away over the weekend. I also received an email from his partner, Rhonda, who wanted to let us all know. She said he had been in decline for the past year and had accelerated in recent weeks. I was aware of his on & off battle with cancer, but not of his latest struggle. From the tone of the conversation at last night's meeting, it seemed that not many were. This, to me, is a sad sign of the times. Living through the pandemic over the last 15 months has had many challenges, and the lack of regular contact with people is certainly one of those. We miss things that would probably not otherwise be missed. I will remember Don for his volunteerism and his desire to give back to his community. He will be missed.
- Banking: I have a meeting set up with an investment advisor at Heritage Family Credit Union on Thursday May 26 to go over our options for setting up an investment account. As we discussed at the April meeting, we are in the fortunate position of having some surplus funds in our bank account, so this is good timing for us to be looking into setting some money aside.
- FY22 Budget: Not much has happened on this front, but we will need to have a final draft for the Board to vote on by the time of the Annual Meeting in June. I will send a 1st draft out just as a launching off point for discussion. What I can tell you is that the main drivers for the coming year are going to be staffing needs, new equipment needs, and the regional underwriting program.
- Annual Meeting: We need to confirm this date, post the notices & send out invitations. We discussed Wednesday, June 23rd – is this date good for everyone? Shall we do an outside event with food, and tie it in with a 20th anniversary celebration?
- Board Election: Last month, the Board approved increasing the number of seats from 7 to 9. This means that there will be 4 seats to elect, with George's term is ending, and with Don's passing, plus the 2 additional seats. I will be interested to hear if any traction has been gained with candidate recruitment over the last month. We will have at least one new candidate that I know of, so far. We will need to advertise for nominations ASAP, so that there is enough lead time before the election. At this week's meeting, the Board will need to decide on the format for voting and when to open it up.
- Protocols for Facility / Studio Re-Opening: As I mentioned last month, I am suggesting that we follow any particular protocols established by the VT Department of Libraries, since there are parallels with the operations at our facility and that of a library. In general, we will follow the "Universal Guidance" outlined by the State here: <https://accd.vermont.gov/covid-19/universal-guidance>. My plan is to have our facility open back up to more "normal" operations on July 1. Currently, we hold open hours between 12–5pm on weekdays and serve community members on a case-by-case basis by appointment. It has worked well to this point, but I think we are ready to open that spigot back up some more, with the proper procedures in place. This means that that masks must be worn in the studio when there is more than 1 person recording, until the time comes when there is no longer a mask mandate.

Production / Programming / Other Projects

- Hybrid Meeting Coverage: Our coverage has been increasingly transitioning to hybrid formats in the various Towns. Some of the Boards, including Mt. Holly Selectboard, have been doing “hybrids” all along. And now with the COVID restrictions easing, many other Boards are opting for this format. In fact, most of the Boards that we cover will soon be holding their meetings in a hybrid format, relying on our equipment and personnel to support them. This is both a great opportunity and challenge for us. I have been advocating for each Town to use ARPA funding for the purchase and installation of “plug & play” style equipment for this use, so that we are not bringing in our own portable equipment to each meeting, which can be problematic.
- Studio Productions: The studio has been seeing an uptick in activity lately, as everyone starts to re-emerge. In the past couple of weeks, we have helped to produce a commentary on mental health awareness, a discussion / update from the independent school (Expeditionary School at Black River), and recital of a Pres. Coolidge speech by LES 6th graders. There will be more to come!
- Green Mountain High School: We have fielded requests from Green Mountain to cover (and live stream) several end-of-year events, including the senior prom “grand march”, Senior Awards night, and the graduation. I have committed to them – and we’ll team up with SAPA to make it all happen.
- Summer Camp: I am working on a plan with Venissa White, the after school & summer camp coordinator for TRSU. There would be some funding for us to hire personnel to work on it, so the impact to our own budget would be minimal. The concept is to offer 3 different segments of “Visual Storytelling”: 1) aerial / drone, 2) using your cell phone as a video camera, and 3) using “POVs” (point-of-view) with GoPro.

Outreach & Marketing / Fundraising

- Reading: We are now receiving recordings of the Reading Selectboard meetings, which we will begin televising immediately – this is the first step in the outreach towards getting more involvement & engagement in Town.
- Underwriting: For the last couple months, we have discussed approaching some past underwriters, as well as some new prospective businesses, to try to gain some additional underwriters for the immediate future, as we work on developing the program & offerings for the future. I am interested to learn where we are at and what needs following-up in relation to this work. For my work on the future “facelift” to the underwriting program, I have followed back up with my regional colleagues. There is interest in hearing our proposal. I do think it’s something that will gain traction.
- Nominating & Solicitation of Candidates: As mentioned above, we have one new potential candidate to the Board. Once we have the election dates & procedure set, we need to post (electronically & in print)
- Programming Highlights in Print: As you know, we have been sending out weekly program highlights & other news via email. Based on both some feedback and the data analytics available, these have been generating some interest. And, as we’ve discussed, the next step is to take a brief synopsis of that to send to the weekly newspapers (the Vermont Journal, The Mountain Times, The Vermont Standard). Our first steps towards making that happen is to get pricing information from the VT Journal. I have sent them a spec and await a response on the estimated cost. If it’s something we can work with, we will tailor it to any suggested specifications that they have and will then pitch the same to the other papers. Stay tuned on that.