



## Director Report November 2019

### Production, Programming, & Training

- Programming Report: Over the past 30 days, we have televised a total of 191 shows, down from 210 over the prior 30-day period. In addition to the 191 shows, we televised 27 PSAs & promos. The combined total of shows plus promos & PSAs was 218 (last month the total was 233, so it's been pretty consistent).
- Of the 218 total shows that were televised, 60 were new (aka "first run").
- 114 of the 218 total shows were "local" / 20 of these were promos & PSAs. And of the 114 local shows, 43 were new ("first run").
- The most viewed videos on the website over the last month were Black River Independent School Update (75 views), & the Nov. meeting of the Cavendish Selectboard (32 views)
- You Tube: most-viewed videos over the past 30-day period are: for many consecutive months, the most viewed video has been a 2014 recording of John Specker- Bonapartes' Retreat (490 views this past month, 384 over the previous month), followed by the OMS Ski Swap promo (216 views), Go Wild Summer Camp highlights (116), & Paleoindians at Jackson Gore (111)
- Production for Hire: We finished up our editing work with Venissa White from TRSU, who was putting together a highlight reel video from the Go Wild Summer Camp. This was partially a production service-for-hire job.
- We will be getting paid for some of our work with the after school programs as well
- We are working with the Solid Waste District on a new show, which will include a segment about Deconstruction. We recorded an interview with the owner of a building deconstruction company who was hired to help in the renovation of a commercial building in Ludlow
- New studio shows: Senior Solutions, BRACC Update, Spotlight (from Ralph Pace), Dr. Linda Thomson on "Hypnosis & the Endocannabinoid System", the Chamber Update (with guests from Springfield Food Co-Op), & FOLA Presents have all been produced over the last month
- New field productions: in addition to the 16 municipal & school board meetings that we covered, we have several other new shows that were produced in the field. Sharon Bixby recorded a presentation about paranormal investigations at BRAM's annual meeting. Eric recorded Ludlow Electric's dedication to Howard Barton. Eric has also continued his regular series of short promos with Cavendish Librarian Kata Welch. And also recorded the Ludlow Veterans' Day Assembly, with Gov. Scott. And Natasha Fortin recorded the BRHSMS Fall Sports Banquet
- Volunteer Producer: Ludlow resident Pat Moore has been sending us several short videos from travel adventures with his wife, as well as local recreational outings. He also records the innkeeper ski races during the winter. This past month, he sent 3 different videos from a recent African trip, a short video of a day hike along the AT near Killington, and another short of opening day at Okemo

### Building & Grounds

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- Painting: we had another painting party earlier in the month. Thanks to Wendy, George, Fra, and volunteer Kirk Benson for coming. George has come back a couple of times to do trim & exterior doors. We are just about finished with the painting- at least for the areas that were part of the renovation scope of work last Spring. (the back corner and the storage areas were not part of the renovations, and remain unpainted). As much as we all love pizza, we won't need to have any more "painting parties" - so thanks to all who have pitched in over the last 6 months.
- Town Follow-Up: Followed back up with Scott Manager from Town of Ludlow on our different requests. We are splitting the cost on the window with the condensation issue. Our cost will be approximately \$150. The Town will do the installation. I believe this will be done soon. The stucco and concrete pad repair will be addressed in the Spring. I am unclear on how the snow guard and rain gutter request is being addressed. In terms of the drainage, paving, & other site work, we left it that we would work together to apply for grants, but that we may be asked to contribute financially, along with BR Good Neighbors.
- Electrical Needs: There is some additional electrical work that needs addressing- better lighting is needed in the front entryway / hallway / lobby area, and we need a couple of new outlets. The electrical contractor who has worked on our building through the various renovation phases, CDP Electric, is supposed to be coming out to spec the job. The plan is to use the building improvement funds from the annual budget
- Glare Problem: As some of you know, we have some pretty significant glare & reflection trouble with the large window in the studio. Studio productions are compromised because of it, especially when using the green screen. We end up having to spend a lot of time trying to fix and clean up bad green screen in postproduction. After dealing with the problem for several years, I have turned my attention towards fixing it once & for all. 3 years ago, I did look into it, and sought help from the window vendor we used, Portland Glass. They suggested replacing it with non-reflective glass, but the price tag was excessive (over \$15K!). I am now looking at adding a tinted film to the window. I was pleased to hear that the total cost of tinting the window is under \$600. I set up an appointment for December 3<sup>rd</sup>, so if all goes according to plan, we can put the newly improved window into action after our Board meeting (details on that below)
- Air Quality: When trying to diagnose occasional olfactory oddities in our space, it occurred to me that we should have an air quality test. I do not believe one was ever done. It certainly would make sense to get that done, since the building was used to store army tanks for decades, and those tanks undoubtedly leaked fluids (we have the stains to prove it), and was never intended to be inhabited.
- Cleaning Service: I have not yet found a new cleaning service, after our trusted cleaner of many years, Terry Chaffee, retired earlier this year. I am taking any recommendations at this point. Thank you to Don for connecting me with one of his contacts.

## **Equipment**

- Switcher: The new production switcher for the studio control room is being ordered – it will be placed by early next week. This is something we discussed in a Board meeting a few months back.
- Selling on eBay: We have had a few items on eBay. Two of the items were purchased as part of the workflow bt. the studio cameras & the older switcher. Since we are replacing the switcher, we no longer need these units. One of them sold, last month, and one is still for sale. I have another item up there for sale as of this week – it's something that we don't use but still has some value. I will continue to post unused items for sale.
- Use of Funds: We have received the payments from the Comcast v Vermont settlement. The intent is to spend a large portion of this on equipment pertaining to live remote origination and/or streaming,

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and I will be working on a proposal for this.

- MS Office: Thanks to a donation from Tech Soup, we have upgraded our MS Office software to Office 365. We now have 3 Premium Office 365 licenses for \$108 / yr., which is a fraction of the retail cost.

## **Outreach & Fundraising**

- Non Profit Roadshow: Wendy & I kicked off the long-discussed "roadshow" with a visit to Fletcher Farm School for the Arts & Crafts a couple of weeks ago. While we have done some work off & on with Fletcher Farm over the years, it was good to speak to them as a group and to lay out what we can offer & how they can make more use of our services. The outcome was that they will begin recording short promos in our studio, to serve as monthly updates about their classes, and they will also work on longer format interviews & demonstrations featuring instructors. That same week, we also met with Kate Foster from Okemo Mountain School. Right away, Kate started sending promo videos that had been produced at OMS. And she & students came in to record a short promo in the studio for last weekend's ski swap. Lastly, OMARA (the non profit youth ski racing org. on Okemo) is interested in having us come talk to them. Kathy Burns, a longtime supporter of ours, is on its Board.
- The People Speak: Wendy has been spearheading a new project, the reading of the US Constitution. The dates to read in the studio are Fri. December 6<sup>th</sup> & Sat. December 7<sup>th</sup>. More info can be found on our website. If you haven't yet been approached or signed up to read, please consider doing so. For those who can't make it in on the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup>, we can record them immediately after the Board meeting on Tuesday the 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- Facebook: The restrictions that were errantly placed on our Facebook page were lifted about a month ago. We have not been experiencing any similar problems over the past month. The reach on our posts appears to be back to normal, and in some cases, when the posts are shared by other users or shared to Facebook "Groups", the reach has been fairly high (sometimes reaching 500 people).
- Memberships: over the past month, we have added a few new members (and contributions): Donna Tedford, David Almond, & Fra DeVine. We have now generated \$600 of the \$1,750 budgeted revenue through memberships
- Underwriting: this needs a re-boot.
- SAPA meeting: I met with Jared Gunnell, E.D. of SAPA-TV to discuss ideas for shared fundraising efforts and other opportunities to pool resources. I would like to see us partner with several of the access stations in the greater region on an underwriting program. Since SAPA is our closest neighbor (we have a lot of overlap), I thought I would focus some attention there. CATV in the Upper Valley is already interested.
- New Grant: As previously reported, back in the Summer, we received notification that we would be awarded a \$500 "Helping Hands" grant from the All State insurance's foundation, thanks to Sharon Bixby's volunteerism. As an All State agent, Sharon nominated us to receive the grant award, which we also received in 2012. I thought we would apply the grant towards the cost of paint. I will be submitting a news release about the grant award & our Board's volunteer painting project.

## **Administrative / Financial**

- PEG Access Study Committee: The committee has concluded. The biggest outcome is a draft bill that will be presented during the upcoming legislative session. The main component to the draft bill is funding to *"contract with one or more independent consultants to assist the General Assembly with evaluating for financing PEG channels and services to communities across Vermont"*. The consultant's job would primarily be two-fold: 1) to work with the Joint Fiscal Office to identify the

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- best source of alternative funding for PEG and 2) to work with VAN & access organizations to audit operations, evaluate where efficiencies can be gained.
- The other component to the draft bill is to evaluate a State / VAN partnership for filling the void left with the closure of VIT (Vermont Interactive Television) *"to increase public participation in State proceedings"*
  - State Budget: The biggest action item for us all right now is to provide comments to the Governor's FY2021 budget recommendations, between now & December 13th. Comments are needed to show support for the budget appropriation request to fund "Community Media Centers" (i.e. PEG Access) and \$200,000 for a Rights of Way Revenue Analysis. Comments must be submitted by Dec. 13th, using the form online at <https://finance.vermont.gov/budget/public-forum>. We will go over this in more detail.
  - Comcast Settlement Funds: We have received the \$23,500 in funding from the Comcast settlement. As per recommendation from Janice Graham's office, this is earmarked as restricted funds in our books. The intended use is \$20,000 for a new remote origination solution, including internet service and any transmission equipment, and \$3,500 to offset any marketing or branding costs associated with moving our channel numbers.
  - New Channel Assignments: Related to the channel number move, we have received communication from Comcast that this will be happening in February. Our new channels will be somewhere in the 1070-1095 range. We don't yet have our new channel assignments, but Comcast is expected to announce them after Thanksgiving. The good news is that our channel numbers will be the same across all of the Towns (no longer will they be different in Mount Holly vs. Ludlow, Plymouth, & Cavendish).
  - FCC & Franchise Fees: So far we are not seeing any impact on the Franchise Fee funding as a result to the recent FCC rule change. IF we do see any impact, it will not be until the next round of payments at the earliest (to be received in mid-February). However, Comcast Regional Director of Government Affairs Dan Glanville, who was the industry rep. on the PEG Access Study Committee, stated during a committee meeting that the recent Comcast v Vermont settlement will supersede the in-kind charge back part of the new FCC rule. He indicated that he did not expect there to be any charge backs in the near term, though there was no commitment long-term. It sounded to me that there is some nuance that they would likely evaluate. It will be interesting to see how VTel addresses the rule change in its accounting.
  - Budget Revision: I would like to recommend that we make a budget revision. I am meeting with John to go over finances & bookkeeping this week and will go over the proposed revision specifically. There are two reasons for this: 1) the glaring one is that I spotted a miscalculation in the operating expenses (the insurance total is not included in the calculation and 2) we now have the \$23,500 from the settlement funds (and the subsequent expenses) to account for, and this should be done in the annual budget.
  - Annual Report: Our regulatory Annual Report is due at the end of the month. I have been working on it and will have it ready to go out by the end of the week. The regulatory version is submitted to the cable operators (Comcast & VTel), as well as the Dept. of Public Service and Public Utility Commission.
  - ACM-NE: Eric attended the Alliance for Community Media's northeast (ACM-NE) regional conference in Portland, ME last month. The conference included the "Nor'easter" award ceremony, during which he received our 1<sup>st</sup> place award for the "Paleoindians at Jackson Gore" short documentary.
  - VAN Summit: The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual summit was held in Rutland on November 14<sup>th</sup>. Rutland Regional Community TV (aka "PEG TV") hosted us in a conference room in the Rutland Medical Center & treated us all to lunch. The focus was on the draft bill coming out of the study committee, clarifying

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the Comcast settlement, the future Statewide "channel" (including possible organizational structures) and a discussion about possible collaborations, pooling of resources, & economies of scale. While this was a continuation of a discussion that has taken place among various parties in different ways, it was good to have it in a larger group setting. More to come on this & it's all still very preliminary, but suffice it to say that a majority of the group has been thinking of such things in some fashion.

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