



Director Report November 2024

Administrative

- Personnel Updates: As mentioned last month, Peter stepped down from the regular part-time position and has transitioned into more of a fill-in position. He is working for us on Thursdays, with the Cavendish After School program, and handling meeting coverage in Mount Holly, as well as other occasional fill-in work. Sarah Devereux has stepped into more of a regular role, taking over the bulk of the regular work that Peter was doing. We have also brought back Sarah Bennett to do some fill-in part-time work. And just last week, our new intern, Caroline Wade started. She comes to us from the River Valley Technical Center's Audio-Video Program (Zach McNaughton's program, from which Rebekah, Sarah D., and Sarah B. each graduated). RVTC has served as quite the feeder program for Okemo Valley TV personnel!
- Annual Reporting: The FY2024 Annual Report has been completed in two different versions: regulatory version (which gets submitted to the Public Utility Commission, Department of Public Service, VAN, & the cable operators), as well as a one-page summary. Both versions are available on the website (okemovalley.tv/documents).
- Election / Legislative Advocacy: It is too soon to tell what the impact of the election will have on the legislative advocacy work that we have been doing through VAN over the past several years. But it is safe to say that there will be changes on the Statewide level, with the turnover of seats. As far as local House Districts, we have new relationships to form, with two new State Reps. (for Rutland-Windsor and Windsor-2), who are becoming first time legislators (Kevin Winter and VL Coffin, respectively).
- Insurance: We are currently operating without Workers' Compensation policy. It was canceled due to the insurer (Star Insurance) no longer offering coverage for organizations that use volunteers. Sharon Bixby (our agent, Ludlow Insurance Agency) is looking for alternatives but so far I haven't heard anything. We also received a cancellation notice for our Directors & Officers policy, effective Nov. 30,, but I just learned that's because the billing goes through Ludlow Insurance and they haven't yet sent the bill, but will do so ASAP. So we should be OK on that one.
- Board Vacancy: The Board still needs to consider accepting Newt's resignation, and make a decision about the vacancy that leaves.
- Committees: We will review committee assignments and a task list for each.
- Policies & Procedures: Since we have not been able to get a quorum the last couple of month, we still need to have the Board do second readings of the 1st two policies (Statement of Purpose & Corporate Structure), and consider them for adoption, followed by a first reading & review of the Membership policy. Next up, we will have an updated Programming & Content Distribution policy for your review. The plan for this year was to have the updated operating policies drafted and brought to you for review & adoption, and then the Personnel Committee would work on revisions to the personnel policies.
- Strategic Planning: Newt & I had discussed applying for a VT Community Foundation "Nonprofit Capacity Grant" to fund the hiring of a consultant to help us with strategic planning. The 2024 window has closed but there will be another round in 2025.

Black River Radio

- Report: Last month, the advisory committee submitted a report to the Board ([which can be found here](#)). The Board meeting last month was just an informal one, as we did not have quorum. Carmine Iannace attended the meeting and led a discussion about the prospective antenna & transmitter sites.

- Statewide Community Radio Collaboration: As mentioned previously, there is a new collaborative statewide working group among community radio stations in VT. While it does not have an official name yet, it has been holding monthly meetings remotely, led by Wendy Mays from the VT Association of Broadcasters and Llu Mulvaney-Stanak from WGDR in Plainfield, the longtime community radio station (formerly the Goddard College station). Each meeting explores a specific topic, the most recent of which was legislative advocacy. There are so many parallels with community TV / PEG, and considering the efforts that we in VAN have been making in this area in recent years, there has been some discussion about combining efforts between community radio & community TV (under the umbrella of “community media”). Johnny Gifford, a VAN Board member and Executive Director of Brattleboro Community TV (and formerly SAPA-TV in Springfield) attended the meeting. He is going to invite Wendy & Llu to attend an upcoming VAN Board meeting to get the ball rolling.

Buildings & Grounds / Equipment / Infrastructure

- Phone System: After months of delays and miscommunications regarding the hopeful switch to TDS Telecom to save, I had to give up. We will instead renew a contract with Comcast - there will still be a substantial savings, though not as much as we were first led to believe had we switched to TDS. As it turned out, the approx. \$70 per month cost was based on some miscommunication & a misunderstanding that TDS had for the system we need. Unfortunately, this is what our budget was based on; instead, the Comcast system will be costing approx. \$127 per month (which is still a significant savings from the \$250 we have been paying).
- Exterior Drainage Issues: The lack of drainage around the exterior of the building has long been identified as a problem area. It has been more than a decade since the Town took on the initial renovations, and we are seeing some structural effects. The latest of these is the rotting of the back door jamb and sill, causing a big hole through which rodents had been entering. Town maintenance staff patched it up as a temporary fix, but it will need more attention for a longer-term solution. The drainage issue now has the attention of the Municipal Manager, Brendan McNamara, who suggested that I work with Cherry Nicoll (Town administrator), to search for possible grants that could fund exterior work. I think a grant writing partnership between Okemo Valley TV, Black River Good Neighbors, & the Town could help towards getting some of the needed work done around the property.

Production & Programming

- Community Coverage: In addition to all of the government meetings that we routinely cover, we have been making it a point to provide coverage for 2-3 community events or short promos each month. Over the last month, this has included coverage of a celebration and open house at the Plymouth Community Center & Schoolhouse, an update from Ludlow Community Center with Parks & Rec. Director Nick Miele, and a very short promo for LAST (Ludlow Area Sports Trails).
- Tasty Twist with Sammy B: Sammy has now recorded over 40 episodes of his series, which has evolved since he started with the first one just 4 months ago. So many musicians (and now also business owners & community organizers) have come through the door to record with him.
- Two New Series from VT Covered Bridge Society: The Vermont Covered Bridge Society, our new organizational member, has launched a new monthly podcast series. They recorded the first episode last week in our studio. Also, one of their members is producing a video series, touring all of the 100 covered bridges in the State. Rebekah has been working with him, training him to edit; there will be 100 short episodes - 1 for each covered bridge.

Community Engagement / Fundraising

- Cavendish After School Program: Things are well underway with our weekly Thursday after school program at the Cavendish library. We will be receiving funding for this project this year, as we have committed to do it through the Spring.

- Grant Update: We will not be receiving a grant from the Mascoma Bank Foundation. Donna & I are regrouping and looking into smaller family foundations who may be able to assist with the building project.
- Membership Drive & Underwriting: We have added some new members over the last month, including organizations (United Church of Ludlow & the VT Covered Bridges Society), as well as organizations (George & Linda Thomson, Donna Tedford, Jim & McKey Berkman, Kevin & Patsy Kuntz, and Jamie Ward). We have now received \$1,949 towards the \$5,000 projected goal for the year. While more effort is needed in the membership drive, the attention is turning to underwriting, which runs on the calendar year. November & December is the time for the underwriting campaign. We need to get serious about how to incorporate Donna's suggestion of integrating it with the local fundraising effort for the building project. Her suggestion is to add 2 new tiers to underwriting: one at \$2,500 and one at \$5,000. If we go this route, we will need a new "one pager", update the website, and reach out to prospective businesses.
- Community Support Policy: As a practice, we have not made financial contributions to other organizations. However, there is no such policy on this topic. We were asked to join the VT Covered Bridge Society for an annual organizational membership (I believe it's \$15). It would be reciprocal support, since they have become an organizational member of Okemo Valley TV for \$50, but since it would be precedent-setting, it is worthy of a Board-level discussion.
- Town Appropriations: I have submitted our requests to Ludlow (\$2,700) and Plymouth (\$850), both representing modest increases. For Plymouth, it is a \$50 increase, but after submitting it I learned that a petition is required for any increase; this policy has been on the books for many years, though I was not aware of it, as we were previously not asked to do a petition when we have requested past increases. With this in mind, I am planning to modify our request back to \$800 to avoid the petition this year. This year, we are planning to submit our first-ever request to Reading, which also requires a petition (this is something I was already aware of, as it is a State statute). We will need a minimum of approximately 30 signatures in order for the request to be brought to the voters at Town Meeting. That will need to be completed in December. I will also be submitting our other letters of requests in to Cavendish, Mount Holly, and Andover in the coming weeks (Cavendish's is due next week, followed by Mount Holly & Andover in December).
- Reading Planning Commission: We are receiving a \$500 contribution from the Town of Reading as a stipend for the AV services & support that we provide to the Planning Commission for their meetings.
- Open House / Holiday Party: We need to determine a date for a holiday party and consider combining it with the open house idea.