



Director Report October 2022

Administrative

- VTEL: As I brought to your attention last month, VTEL's Certificate of Public Good (CPG) expired on September 22. The CPG is the required license, issued by the Public Utility Commission, to conduct telecommunications business as a public utility in the State of VT. Normally, there is a process before a CPG expires where the utility applies for renewal. This renewal process is overseen by the Department of Public Service. However, with VTEL's CPG, the process only just now seems to be underway. To a layman like me, our contract with VTEL is essentially null & void now that the CPG has expired. I am trying to get that clarified by the Department. The Department has requested that someone from our group – those of in VTEL's territory – to participate in their "community needs assessment", a first step in the CPP renewal process. I await further dialogue with their Consumer Affairs division, to see what this entails and to also get that clarification we need regarding our contract status. I did also recently hear from Gordon Matthews, head of VTEL's Regulatory Affairs, requesting a letter of support from us. He has received one from SAPA-TV and Rutland's PEG TV so far. This matter is up for our Board's consideration.
- Comcast Contract Renewal: Our contract with Comcast expired at the end of 2017. We have been operating under the same terms ever since. Again, Comcast wanted to wait until its litigation with the State of Vermont was settled, which came to pass in 2019. Contract renewal talks were initiated by Melissa Pierce, Comcast's head of Government & Regulatory Affairs, in early 2020, but then fell silent. Many of the other stations in VT have renewed in the time since. Then, last week I was contact by Melissa – we revisited the discussion, and she had answers to some of the questions I posed to her in 2020. These were: 1) fixing the damage caused by the incomplete cable replacement from 2018, 2) replacing the old coax cable connection with a fiber connection, 3) getting HD channels, 4) replacing the contractual ad reimbursement with a financial contribution, and 5) adding the Towns of Andover, Reading, & Shrewsbury to our designated service area. I have her answers to all of those which I will share with you. She also sent me a draft contract for your review & consideration.
- State Appropriation (\$25K): The Public Utility Commission has requested that we each account for how the money will be spent. A spreadsheet was created for all of us VAN members to use for this purpose. Since we already had a plan for this incorporated into our own annual budgeting, this was made easy for me. I see the greatest needs being upgrades to our online distribution, marketing, & design work for the building renovations.
- Personnel: After feeling some burnout, I finally started finding ways to improve better balance by taking some time off here & there. I am grateful that the board made an allowance last year to "carry over" unused days from 2020 (year 1 of COVID), to be used over the two following years. This meant that, in addition to my 33 days of annual earned time, 11 days were added last year, giving me 44 days. At the end of the fiscal year (June 30), I had 10 days as a balance, which has been carried over to this year. That means I have 43 days of PTO to use by June 30, 2023 (as per the Board approval, no balance will be carried over after that). So far, since July 1, I have used a whopping 20 of them. So, I am well on track to using them all. I am taking a couple of days off this week, and I will be away from Thurs. 11/3 – Tues. 11/8 (Election Day). I feel like I am getting reset, after teetering in burnout for a while. On that note, next week marks 20 years from my start date. I thought of that last night as I was at the Cavendish Selectboard meeting. On a late October night in 2002, that was

one of the very first things I did for the station – I covered the Cavendish Selectboard. I was in new surroundings, in unfamiliar territory, and a stranger to all. I cannot believe 2 full decades have passed since then. I realized with amusement last night, as my camera panned the crowd, that I was capturing many of the same faces, 20 years later. Some

- Finance & Bookkeeping: The Office of Janice Graham CPA, has been reconciling our bank accounts for the last several years. To better streamline this process and save us some money, Wendell has offered to take over the reconciliations and plans to start doing them monthly. He will do so on a 3-month trial basis, through January, at which time we will re-evaluate. We do have a possible option of hiring an independent bookkeeper to do that work, if needed. I have recently spoken with one, Shannon Kenison, who may be a possibility for us if we decide to go back to wanting to outsource this task.
- Google Workspace: From the “Boring but Important” category, I have been slowly but steadily getting us set up with a Google Workspace for Nonprofits account. This is bringing all of our Google apps under one “umbrella” (Drive, Calendar, You Tube, and Gmail). Going a step further, we will soon be using Gmail for all our okemovalley.tv email. The process of setting up the email and migrating everything over from our email host has been a bit of a chore, but once complete, this will better streamline all things Google (and to be clear, there is a heavy dose of Google in our workflows).

Community Engagement / Fundraising

- Postcard: Lisa has taken the initiative to develop a marketing postcard for staff & other crew members to bring out on location when doing a shoot or other event. We can look at it & discuss during the Board meeting.
- LinkedIn: Lisa also set up a LinkedIn page. This will add the professional networking site to our social media arsenal. We can do a demo of it at the Board meeting.
- Promo Materials: Now that we have our feet (somewhat) under us and we are starting to expand upon our marketing, I would like to look at having promotional materials. This has always been a shortcoming for us – many years ago we had hats & t-shirts. We once also had some pens. I feel like we are in a position now to “up our game”, which is, in part, what I had in mind when I put together our budgeted use of the \$25,000 State appropriation. This is something the Community Engagement Committee has only broadly discussed as a goal, but I would like to move it up to the front burner. It is good to have some materials to give out to members and at events.
- Rotary Award: The Ludlow Rotary Club invited me in as a guest speaker two weeks ago, to give an update from the station. To my surprise, they also presented me with its Community Service Award. I really appreciate the acknowledgement but feel that the good work we do and the value we have in the community is because we are a strong organization with great people behind it. WE provide a valuable community service.
- Non Profit Pledge Drive: We are on for hosting the inaugural live TV pledge drive & auction on Sat. December 10th from 10am – Noon, with Paula VanGuider’s organization, PA’s Way. This is something we’ve discussed in the past as a great opportunity to partner with other non profits, create some awareness & visibility, bring different people into the studio and, hopefully, raise a bit of money for us and our partners. Press materials will be going out soon, as we promote the event & try to generate some buzz leading up to December 10th. As we discussed at last month’s Board meeting, it would be great to have a few volunteers on hand for that morning. I am evaluating where the greatest needs are, and right now, that appears to be with accepting & processing donations, over the phone and online. We now have a Squared account, so that we can finally accept credit cards. We need to also develop some basic policies around this new type of partnership, specifically in relation to shared fundraising and managing donations.

Production / Programming

- Election Coverage: Speaking of partnerships, we have been teaming up with other groups on candidate forums. Beginning 2 weeks ago with the Cavendish Community & Conservation Association, we hosted a candidate interview with Rep. John Arrison, who is running for re-election to the Windsor-2 House seat (it was supposed to be a forum between John & his opponent, Stu Lindberg). We then recorded the State Senate candidate forum hosted by FOLA at Ludlow Town Hall. This week, we will be working with the Vermont Standard on a forum between the two candidates running for the Windsor-5 House seat (Woodstock-Plymouth-Reading). That is being reported in this week's Standard, which comes out on Thursday. We have also been picking up various forums & debates featuring candidates for Statewide & national office, thanks to our colleagues across the State, including CCTV Town Meeting TV & VTDigger.
- Chili Cook-Off & Cider Days: Sarah & Rebekah were out over the recent holiday weekend at the 2 marquee events in the area. They created short highlight videos for each event.
- Green Mountain Soccer: Amy Mosher continues to cover the soccer games (primarily boys' soccer, since her son plays. She is also doing a couple of girls' games when she can). We have not heard from anyone else about wanting to cover sports. November will be a good time for some more school outreach, as they prep for the winter sports season.

Equipment Upgrades / Facility / Building Improvements

- Lighting Upgrades: The new (to us) additional lighting is installed in the studio. We are doing this in stages. So far, it's already made a remarkable improvement. More to come!
- Online Distribution Upgrade: We discussed this at the last meeting, where I provided some information related to a vendor I had been in talks with (Lightcast) about hosting some of our online distribution. By "online distribution" I mean live streaming, video-on-demand, and OTT / streaming app. As a follow-up, the pricing we would be looking at is \$449 / month, which would include work to develop OTT apps (for ex.: Apple TV, Fire TV, Roku...). This is work they value at \$5K per app., but that they would include in the one -year contract.
- Design Services: I have reached out to a company called Existing Conditions, which hails itself as a service that provides drawings of existing conditions efficiently & expediently. I have requested a consultation to review our project, after which point I will have more info. to share with you. Henry Erickson, the construction management consultant who provided the cost estimate for us last year, recommended I contact them.
- Volunteer Work Day(s): Shortly after last month's Board meeting, we had a volunteer work day, bringing several loads of waste to the Ludlow Transfer Station. Thanks to George & Noah for offering their time, bodies, & vehicles. We got a lot done in a short amount of time. The storage area is now much less cluttered and the shed is more cleared out.