



Director Report September 2022

Administrative

- Staffing: Gavin has left to go back to school. We still have Sarah with us – she does not go back to school until February. Future & succession planning are now the focus.
- State Support: We should be receiving the \$25,000 budget appropriation from the State in the very near future.
- Committees: Committees were assigned during the re-organizational meeting in July. For there to be progress, I think each committee should appoint a chair, and then I can meet and/or discuss action items with the chairs. So far, I believe the only progress has been an attempt to get the Community Engagement Committee together. We couldn't make it happen, however. It can often be a challenge getting people together, especially during Summer. This impacts the effectiveness of the Summer membership drive – ideally, we'd have the committee working on this and the Board fully engaged with it. As the membership drive and other initiatives are planned, timing and availability of Board & staff need to be closely considered.
- Comcast Contract Renewal: As a reminder, our Comcast contract expired in 2017. We have been operating under the same terms ever since. The intention on Comcast's behalf was to wait until there was a settlement in the Vermont v Comcast US District Court case. That came in 2019. After that time, Vermont Access Network (VAN) & Comcast negotiated and agreed upon a contract template that Comcast would use for all of us within VAN. I had an initial conversation with Melissa Pierce, Comcast's head of Government & Regulatory Affairs, in early 2020, but there has been no action. There are still outstanding items that need to be addressed from a botched 2018 cable installation in our location.
- VTEL: We are about to be in a similar boat with VTEL. Our contract expired last year, but in it there is a clause about the terms being upheld until their CPG (Certificate of Public Good) expires. Well, it is expiring next week (Sept. 22nd), and I haven't heard anything about the status. I am looking into it, which may require calling the Department of Public Service. We need to know what happens when & if that expires. The CPG is a license that is required for any utility to operate in the State, and cable TV is regulated as a utility – [it falls under Public Utility Commission \(PUC\) Rule 8.00](#). Rule 8.23 discusses with the renewal process and mentions that the PUC will conduct a community needs assessment to collect input from stakeholders, including PEG stations in the applicant's territory. We have not been contacted by the PUC nor VTEL. I surveyed our 5 colleagues who also have VTEL contracts – only one of them (SAPA in Springfield) had any contact about this, and it was a request from VTEL for SAPA to write a letter of support. I should have more info. on this very soon.

Fundraising

- Summer Membership Drive: The drive has been carried out through our e-news and social media campaigns. We have a promotional video that has been running on TV and featured on the website. Thank you to our new members and those who have renewed so far this year: Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, Bob Greenawalt, Wendell Perkins, John Cama, Gary Blodgett, & Side Hill Cronchers. This has brought in \$875 in revenue, nearly all of which was received this fiscal year (after July 1), and thus is reflected in this year's budget. It's worth nothing, however, that only 2 of these are non-Board members This signifies a need for more outreach & community engagement. There is work to be done in this area. Ideally, we

would have full Board & staff participation, and then do personal asks among friends, colleagues, neighbors, etc.

- Non Profit Pledge Drive: For many years, the idea of hosting non profit pledge drives in our studio has been tossed around. It was one of the “selling points” of building a professional studio. It’s a way to engage with more non profits, build value, provide a needed service, and generate a bit of revenue as a result. The concept is that we would partner with a non profit, to produce a pledge drive for them. It would be televised & streamed live. Proceeds to be split 50/50. I have had informal conversations over the last few years with various groups about this – there is interest. The most interested & ready to go is Paula VanGuidler, a Ludlow resident who recently formed a non profit dedicated to mental health advocacy. She started a new series that she is recording in our studio and would like to take advantage of the pledge drive opportunity. She is hoping Saturday morning December 10th would work for us. I am scheduled to have a conversation with her on Thursday about this. Another local group who is interested in doing a pledge drive with us in the near future is Black River Action Team.

Production / Programming

- Meeting Coverage: Thanks to Bob Greenawalt for recording the entire series of Ludlow Rental Registry Committee meetings, which culminated in late August. The Committee’s chair was Selectman Justin Hyjek, who expressed his appreciation for the service that was provided by Bob and to the station for showing the recordings. As far as other meetings, we have been keeping up with the regular coverage. This includes the school boards within the Two Rivers Supervisory Union, which now require much less of our time & resources – best of all – none of our equipment. The SU has installed equipment in each of the meeting locations – the equipment is integrated with Zoom, so that Zoom is used
- Event Coverage: We have been getting back to providing event coverage on a regular basis, to various non profits & community groups. This is part of our ongoing community engagement efforts. With the additional staff and being fortunate enough to have some volunteers help this Summer, we have been able to ramp this part of our operations up. The result is a lot of new community programming, benefiting multiple organizations. Below are some examples from the past 6 weeks.
- Summer Concert Series: We continued to provide coverage of a variety of Summer concerts on the Green – we did several in Proctorsville, a few in Belmont, & one in Ludlow. Having Gavin & Sarah with us this Summer was instrumental in being able to provide this coverage.
- Plymouth Folk & Blues Festival: Thanks to Pat Moore for covering two of the concerts that took place.
- Shakespeare Alive!: Thank you to Pat Moore & his wife Penny for covering this year’s performance from Stand Up Shakespeare at the Coolidge Site on Plymouth Notch . It was the same day as the Folk & Blues coverage. Busy day for them!
- Rod & Gun Club Field Day: Sarah went out and covered this, highlighting the annual event from the Black River Rod & Gun Club.
- Best of Vermont Summer Fest: Thank you to Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, for helping with the coverage of the Chamber’s 2nd annual Summer festival. Sarah ran camera and Lisa did “person on the street”-style interviews
- Plymouth Old Home Day: Sarah covered this event in early August, at the Coolidge State Historic Site.
- Green Mountain Soccer: Amy Mosher, last year’s Producer of the Year, is back covering Green Mountain Union High School boys’ soccer games. We hope to find some others who are interested in covering school sports. Training & equipment can be provided. As part of our ongoing outreach to local schools, Bob Greenawalt offered to reach out to some of the

contacts to get a conversation going about coverage of school events & how we can be of service.

- New Studio Shows: As mentioned above, Paula VanGuilder has launched a new series: “Talk with Paula”. She recently recorded 2 episodes with another scheduled later this month. Also, Lisa & Bob launched their new series: “Messy Suitcase”, which is all about traveling. They welcome community members to come on and discuss their own travels.
- Production Service for Hire: As previously noted, we were hired by Lake Rescue Association to produce & record its hybrid Annual Meeting event, which was held next door at the Community Center in early August. Due to some technical difficulties with the set up (partly on us, partly on them), the Board President Bruce Zanca expressed his disappointment. I then waved the fee, in the interest of diplomacy and our relationship with the Association. The saving grace is that we were able to fix the problem in post-production, so the recording (which has been televised & is available on our website & You Tube channel). Also, as previously noted, I have been working with the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Planning Commission on the production of a series of short videos. It’s been a slow-going process, but it will be picking back up in October.

Equipment Upgrades / Facility / Building Improvements

- Lighting Upgrades: Back in June I reported that I had received donated studio lights & lighting equipment from our colleagues at The Media Factory in Burlington. The lights are the same fluorescent models that we have in our studio grid, which is perfect/. We have needed additional light for some time, and the fact that we got these for free is a huge help. Our tech help contractor, Tom Dooley, is helping me install them. We started that work last week. There were some additional cables that were needed. I just received those and we’re now ready to complete the job, which will be sometime next week.
- VOD, OTT, & 24/7 Streaming: It’s time to start integrating our various online viewing platforms. The reasons are multi-fold – at the top of the list is that online viewing (whether it’s on the website, You Tube channel, 24/7 streaming, or via a streaming app (“OTT”), online viewing is becoming (if it hasn’t already become) more vital than the cable TV channels. Up to this point, we have been resourceful while increasing the viewing platforms and making improvements to each as we go. There is potential to do so much more with it, to increase the viewing audience and, in turn, the level of engagement, which then leads to increased revenue potential. There are 3 primary platforms for online viewing at present- 1) Video-on-Demand (“VOD”) on our website and You Tube, 2) 24/7 live streaming of our channels (which we launched last year) – this is a live stream of each of our TV channels, currently using You Tube for hosting, which is free, but also problematic. 3) “OTT” (over-the-top), which is watching via a streaming app (we are currently on the Cablecast Screenwave app for Roku & Apple TV devices. It comes as a free add-on to our bundled service with Cablecast (the vendor for our broadcast / playout & video-on-demand servers). It’s a bit clunky and not customizable. Plus, it’s a shared app among many other Cablecast clients, which are other PEG stations across the country. I spent some time exploring options and have found one that I intrigued by: a company called Lightcast. They are a big player in the broadcast & streaming worlds, for integrating online content. So far from what I have learned, I think this is a good option for us. It’s not free, but it would certainly be a more efficient way of integrating our online platforms while also improving the overall online

viewing experience. We were cutting edge when we started putting video-on-demand on our website in 2007. We spent a significant number of resources to do that. Then, in 2013, we made improvements to that, with a big upgrade to the website, and again in 2016, when we migrated our video library over to the new Cablecast system. But since then- over the last 6 years- we have been relying on free and very low-cost options for online distribution. It's now time for another needed upgrade

- Architectural Services: I have been in touch with the architect on the original building project, Claudio Veliz, to let him know that our plans for moving forward with the completion of the project are now on hold. We contracted with Claudio back in 2010 to provide architectural services (including design, completion of floor plans, & construction oversight), for the duration of the project. Whereas the project has not yet been completed, even though it's 12 years later, the contract is still effective. What is needed to terminate the contract is a letter from the Board explaining that the project has been terminated. I think it's safe to say that if & when we want to do the needed renovations, we can treat it as a brand new project; we would then have the freedom to work with any vendor(s) for any design and/or construction work.
- Volunteer Work Day(s): There are some projects that are on the list that we don't seem to get to. There is never enough time to get to all of it. In the past, we would have an occasional volunteer work day when something specific was needed. I was thinking we might want to bring this back. One current example is with organizing & clearing out of items that are no longer used or needed. The shed & our storage area needs some sorting & cleaning out. What's needed is someone with a Ludlow transfer station sticker and a truck or a vehicle with a hitch to which I can attach my dump trailer. We have items for e-waste, plus some hazardous waste items, metal recycling, old furniture that could be donated, and just regular old trash.