

## **Okemo Valley TV Board Meeting**

**Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 5:30PM held via Zoom**

**Present:** Pat Moore, Sharon Huntley, Noah Schmidt, George O. Thomson, Don Richardson joined at 6:32, Patrick Cody, Executive Director, Okemo Valley TV, Eric Chatterjee, Okemo Valley TV

**Absent:** Wil Harris, John Cama

**I. Call to Order/ Review Agenda** – The meeting was called to order by President Noah at 5:48.

**II. Communications/Public Comments** –Patrick shared that there were public comments of appreciation by Municipal Manager Scott Murphy and Justin Hyjek at the Ludlow town meeting. They indicated that they were grateful for the extra efforts that Okemo Valley TV has undertaken during these difficult times. They particularly expressed appreciation to Eric for running the meeting and for managing the questions. .

**III. Review Meeting Minutes – November 19, 2020-** Noah made a motion to approve the minutes of the meeting of November 19 as printed. Pat provided a second. The motion was approved unanimously.

**IV. Director Report: Shifting Priorities – Live Streaming, Town Meeting Coverage, New Hires, Internet Upgrade, Regional Collaborations (20 minutes)**

Patrick sent out a report prior to the meeting. Overall, the station has been very busy the past few months and Patrick has had to prioritize requests. Live streaming has been very popular. The staff has been recording sporting events and hybrid town meetings. They have been working with towns to assure their meetings go smoothly. In order to help meet the demands and help support all the requests, Patrick hired Sarah Deveraux on an hourly basis. She is currently a student at GMUHS who has taken technology courses at the River Valley Tech Center in Spfld. She has been busy setting up streaming of BB games and is involved in a variety of other activities. She is paid as an hourly employee for a maximum of 10hr per week at \$15 per hour. Hopefully, as this service grows we might be able to get a revenue stream to support it so we can do even more.

Noah asked if we might be able to ask businesses to support this. Patrick said we should develop a plan for this and then promote it. While we cannot have advertising on our stations, we could have advertising on YouTube or Facebook live.

So far there has been little effort in the memberships campaign but nonetheless we have gained a few new members. There is definitely more visibility this year. Patrick also shared that he is continuing outreach with schools. The PEG funding study has been completed and is presently being discussed in the legislature and appearing in articles are appearing in the papers. While some of our work is aired on TV the times have changed and much of our work is now on broadband and through social media, i.e. YouTube, and Facebook. Fewer cable subscribers is a problem as that determines our franchise fees. The regulations governing funding of local access stations is outdated and the legislature is now being asked to reflect on the broader work that we do. Hopefully, they will be looking to find other funding sources. As the number of cable subscribers continues to decline, revenue stream for PEG stations will eventually be reduced.

Patrick also said that he is looking to possibly become more visible in Reading as they are in our catchment area. We could possibly become directly involved or at least broadcast meetings recorded by another PEG station. We are doing more (and certainly can do even more) things in partnership with other stations. We need to continue discussion about shared services and/or possible mergers. Patrick mentioned he is having a

discussion with the Expeditionary School at Black River about “History Day” presentation. Newt Rose has volunteered to accompany Patrick to this meeting.

**V. Financial Report (10 minutes)** – The bottom line is that we are very solvent at the present time. We received CRF funds which helped which has not all been spent yet. We also have restricted funds from Comcast settlements in the budget that we plan to use it for an internet upgrade. At the moment, we have approximately \$29,000 in our Operating Account and just shy of \$10,000 in the Capital account. The checkbook balance is \$76,054 and the Money Market balance is \$28,664. Patrick will talk with John and Noah about possibly moving some of the money from the checking account into an interest-bearing account. Patrick also said he would like to purchase some new equipment which we have enough money for in the current budget. We are 65% through the FY, yet we are at 76% of anticipated income. We underestimated receipt of franchise fees as we expected there to be a reduction, but instead, the fees are on par with where they have been for past few years. If we could increase membership and get more funds through, general donations, we would really be in good shape. Our expenses are close to what we anticipated. We have purchased two streaming servers to stream channels 24/7 which we paid for through our budget. We are, however, only setting one up at the moment due to cost of tech parts, but may set the other one up later. We continue to have limitations due to our internet upload speed which needs to be addressed. Patrick is looking into this.

**VI. Membership Drive & Business Underwriting (15 minutes)** - We have some activity here which can be viewed in Patrick’s report. He speculates this is because of little blurb at the end of newsletter. We have \$1,200 projected in the budget and already have realized that. For underwriting, we have proposed \$1,000 in the budget and already have taken in \$800. With some effort on membership this could certainly be higher. Sharon felt we could still send out an eblast blurb to people about membership and suggested the list of names that board members provided might be the target. Sharon will finish the draft of a membership eblast and then we will have a meeting for approval prior to getting it out. Sharon, Wil and Patrick are on the Marketing Committee and should be involved. Sharon said due to her work schedule, a meeting will have to be after 5:30 or on the weekend. She said Tuesday or Friday night is the best day of the week. She will do an agenda and Noah will set up a meeting with the committee and send out an email.

### **VII. Short Term Goals: Outreach Priorities & To Do List (15 minutes)**

Patrick indicated that membership is a priority and he is pleased that a meeting will happen soon. Once that is accomplished we will need to prepare a letter to the business community. Patrick felt that we should use a targeted list rather than sending a letter to all businesses in the area. Sharon suggested we start with the Chamber list and selectively pick businesses that we might have a relationship with.

Rachel Hyjek has expressed some interest in doing something. She has responded to our newsletter and has sent us a video. Sammy Blanchette is also possibly interested in producing a concert/show. Noah will be intermediary between Patrick and Sammy. Sharon asked about videoing prospects for the Cavendish summer concert series which is scheduled to happen. There was a discussion on possibly getting a sponsor for the entire concert series which will run for six weeks...the first week of July and the first two weeks of August. Patrick said getting a volunteer to film the concerts is a challenge and it is really not in the budget to pay an employee. He estimated it would cost about \$50 per concert. There was further discussion about sponsors for specific programs i.e., a ski shop sponsors ski races.

**VIII. Other Business** – There has been some positive comments on the newsletter. While this exposure is good, it is only a start and we now need to consider how to get it in the paper. Sharon said if we could pare down the copy to be succinct, it might be possible to get it into the local paper but probably not free. Patrick suggested we might be able to pay a small fee ( \$25) on a weekly basis to support this submission. He said we also need to consider how to get our name out there on other platforms. He suggested we address

membership and underwriting first and then move on to this topic. Sharon asked Patrick if he could do a mock-up of what we might be looking for and get it to her so she could ask for price quote.

**IX. Confirm next meeting date (s)** – The next regular board meeting will be Wednesday, March 24, 5:30. There will be an earlier meeting of the marketing committee March 16 at 6 pm.

**X. Adjourn** - Sharon made a motion to adjourn which was seconded by George. The motion was approved by all and the meeting concluded at 6:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

George O. Thomson  
Secretary