

Okemo Valley TV Board of Directors
Regular Meeting
By Conference Call
Tuesday, March 17, 2020, 5:30 pm
Monthly Minutes

AGENDA

Present: George O. Thomson, Fra DeVine, Wendy Regier, Don Richardson, John Cama, Noah Schmidt, Sharon Bixby, Patrick Cody, Executive Director, Okemo Valley TV

I. Call to order – The meeting was called to order by President Fra at 5:34 pm.

II. COVID-19 Coronavirus response & Actions – Patrick stated that some documents from various sources pertaining to COVID-19 are being shared by the station on our channels. Overall things are going well at the station. Most of the towns are shut down as is the Community Center Office which is open by appointment only. This is so staff can disinfect equipment and the place. BRGN shut down. It is open by appointment only. Some of the town meetings are being cancelled. Everyone seems to be adhering to the policy of social distancing. OVTV will record any meetings that are held and adhere to safety guidelines. Some filming opportunities are being cancelled. However, there is a lot of programming that is available through the CDC, the state and PSA's which will be aired. There is also material from the Vermont Media exchange which can be downloaded and aired. Although limited, there will be some locally produced shows. Patrick will be working from home some of the time. The staff may do some things that have been put off ...editing projects, inventories, etc.

Noah asked if the station can help the schools. Patrick reached out to the superintendent and the principals to let them know we are here to help in any way they need. There has been some interest but nothing definite

yet. Kata, the librarian from Cavendish, did a bunch of story time shows for the preschool kids. This is an opportunity for the station to demonstrate the importance of public access. The journalism teacher at GMUHS has interest in doing something. Fra suggested Patrick reach out to him again. We need to be flexible with programing. The district is using zoom to communicate with their community.

Fra suggested Patrick send out a memo to the full email contact list to let folks know the state releases on COVID-19 are broadcast on OVTV. It would be helpful to include the time of broadcasts and the channels. People may not be looking to public access TV for the information so we should let them know what is available.

III. Review Meeting Minutes –January 21, 2020 Wendy made a motion to approve the minutes of January 21. Don seconded the motion. It was passed unanimously.

IV. Communications – Patrick said that there have been several communications which he will cover under legislative update. Melissa Pierce from Comcast contacted us regarding the roll out of channels. All the numbers are changing to the 4 digit numbers and the old channels will disappear shortly. Our new numbers are 1078 and 1086. There is a technical lag in some of the work with Comcast so we are not fully set yet. We asked for channels back to back, but were told that they could not do that as Comcast is grouping educational and governmental channels in specific ranges.

There has been several communications regarding COVID.

V. V-Tel Funding Issue - Comcast and VTel are supposed to provide payments to us on a quarterly basis within 45 days after close of the quarter. This has not been an issue with Comcast and we have been receiving payments on a regular basis. The VTel payment has not come in yet for the last quarter. Patrick contacted them but as of today has had a response. He has talked to colleagues and others have had the

same problem. This is being looking at as an FCC issue. Patrick believes they are looking at how to charge back for in kind services. Regardless, they need to get approval from the PUC (Public Utilities Commission) before they can do this. Consequently, they still owe us the money and should be paying within the 45 day time frame. Fra suggests Patrick talk to VAN. Patrick indicated that there are so few of us who are on VTel, he does not think it would be a priority. All that being said, one station (Rutland) reported that they received their check today, so our check is possibly in the mail. The question is how do we to hold them to their commitment? Currently they are not compliant. Fra suggested the group of six stations might collaborate and write to the FCC. Wendy asked of any of the stations has a lawyer on their board that might be able to write on behalf of everyone. Patrick indicted he did not know that.

Our check should be between \$5,000 and \$6,000. Patrick will let us know when it arrives.

VI. Legislative Update – There is a Senate and House bill for \$100,000 in support of helping stations find other viable sources of funds from the state funds. This would support the work that we do. It is encouraging as the state representatives are showing us support. This bill now needs to make it through the appropriations committee. Unfortunately, this is on hold now due to COVID-19 issues. There was hope for a \$500,00 appropriation bill but that is not happening.

VII. FY2021 Budgeting – April 1 is the start of the 4th quarter so it is time to prepare a proposed budget for the coming year. Patrick can prepare a first pass and then share it with the finance committee. Fra suggests he prepare a flat budget. Patrick needs to confirm who is on finance committee.

VIII. Channel Changes and Upgrades – Marketing – There was a discussion on how are we going to market the changes in our channel numbers. Patrick said we are using Comcast money to do a mailing and

an electronic promotion. It will include the announcement of the channel number changes and the upgrades to high definition which is currently being broadcast on Comcast and soon on the VTel the channels. We will also announce that we will have our schedules on the electronic programming guides.

Wendy has been helping Patrick figure out the best way to do this. They received an estimate on cost for a post card mailing and are looking for the best way to do this to get the most for the money. It appears the best deal is the non-profit bulk mailing rate. They think it will be a 9 cent rate for a mailing to everyone in the five zip codes we represent. Wendy's daughter who is a graphic designer will be doing the design for us for a reasonable rate. She will do a first pass this week and a finished one by the 30th of the month assuming we have the application for the bulk rate by the PO. We have been told it takes about three weeks to get the permit and it has been about 2 weeks since we made the application. This mailing will be to approximately 5,000 addresses.

Other stations are announcing changes at the current time. SAPA had an advertisement in the newspaper. Patrick wants to hold off on the mailing until everything is working properly as things are a bit jumbled now. Noah asked if we can create a video PSA and have Comcast/VTel run it in the area. We plan to do a PSA to run on our channels and on Facebook. The message will announce the change in channel numbers and also that shows are available on the web and u-tube. The approximate cost for design and mailing is in the \$1,600- \$1,800 range. This includes doing everything. We have the lists from all the towns but we do not have to do anything with it as the postal service has the addresses for the zip code areas we service. Wendy believes the cards will be personalized with individual names on the cards. Patrick will get exact details from the PO.

We were invited back to meet with FFF School for the Arts staff. Patrick said we met with them in Nov. to review what was discussed and to consider options on how we could be of service. He thinks they were

interested in using us for promoting their classes. Wendy suggested they might try some on-line courses. It is at least something to explore.

Our Facebook page is one of platforms we use to promote videos etc. It is currently used a lot. Once again there are problems with them restricting our posting. Patrick doesn't know why. You can't reach anyone to talk to about problems. It appears that u-tube is restricting as well. They seem to think we are violating some of their policies, but we do not know what it is. This was brought to our attention. We are listed as non-profit with Facebook. Unfortunately, this limits some of our outreach as it is one way that folks engage with us.

IX. Fundraising – The only activity going on at the present time is Shaw's give back program. This seems to be low priority for them. It is hard to gauge how successful this will be for us. Patrick previously wrote to us in an email about it. The non-plastic bags law goes into effect July 1. The bags for the promotion are not the ones they have near the register. They are in a separate display. We need to spread by word of mouth.

X. Establishing Nominating and Election Committee – We do not have a Nominating and Election committee. We need to create one. Fra announced that he will step down from the board when his term ends. John and Sharon terms end this year. George, Wendy and Noah will function as the committee and try and find some new candidates. Patrick suggests we need to try and find some younger people. Noah has an interest in this. Wendy asked about trying to target for what we need i.e. a lawyer or finance person. It would be helpful to have folks that know the community well. GOT will arrange a meeting with Noah and Wendy and work with Patrick. Patrick said the charge is to identify candidates and oversee the election process. Wendy suggested each one of us tries to come up with a couple of names of candidates.

XI. Other business – None

Patrick said the collaboration discussion with other stations is temporarily tabled. He said there has been more meaningful discussion on what we might do in the future...pooling resources and/or potential mergers.

XII. Review Year- End Calendar & To Do List –

Patrick will provide the board with a first draft of a proposed budget for FY'21. We will need to set a date for our annual meeting. It needs to be held sometime before June 30. He felt it is better to have the meeting sooner than later although with the coronavirus, this may have an impact on when we can have it. We can announce this in May if things look better. It would be better not to announce now and then have to cancel.

XIII. Confirm Next Meeting Date (s) – Our next meeting will be Tuesday, April 14. John has indicated he could possibly set up a meeting on webex. Or if that is not possible then we might hold our meeting by phone.

XIV. There was a motion adjourn by Wendy at 6:50. Seconded by Noah and approved unanimously.