



**Okemo Valley TV  
Monthly Meeting  
Tuesday, May 14, 2024, at 5:30 PM EDT**

*Minutes*

**Present:** Noah Schmidt, George O. Thomson, Newton Rose, Robert Greenawalt, Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, Patrick Cody, Executive Director, Okemo Valley TV

**Present on Zoom:** None

**Absent:** Claire McKey Berkman, Wendell Perkins, Zachary McNaughton

**Guest:** Michelle Stinson

I. Call to Order. Noah called the meeting to order at 5:34 PM and reviewed the Agenda.

II. Public Comment & Communications

Radio -Newt reported that 3 people attended the community listening session gauging interest in a low-power radio station via Zoom, 12 in person, and Michelle Stinson, who attended this meeting, represented others. Stinson, who has worked in radio at WPLR in CT, said she went to a session on radio in 2008 that talked about making the station name Okemo Valley Community Media instead of OVTV. She said people are very enthusiastic about radio in our community, and mentioned that Claudine Langille helped start the successful WEQX in Killington. Stinson said no one at the listening session saw a reason not to move forward, and suggested asking the town for money from ARPA funds to get the station going.

Bob Greenawalt expressed concern about ARPA being one-time money, and wondered how the radio station would be financed after that influx. He asked if anyone volunteered to be in charge of the radio station, as he continues to be concerned about overextending OVTV staff members. Michelle responded that radio fits the TV station's mission, and acknowledged that money is always a challenge. Patrick said a local retiree named Carmine volunteered to provide technical expertise, engineering, etc.

Newt shared the following takeaways from the meeting:

- People are very enthusiastic because of the ability to reach local audiences and beyond, and provide the legitimacy of FCC license.

- Radio has lower barriers for the cost of producing content compared to video, and offers the ability to have a wide variety of content.
- Most attendees favored the creation of one Community Media organization rather than a separate entity for radio.
- The group showed eagerness to move forward with concrete steps. There was discussion of station name, antenna location, shows they would do, etc.

Michelle suggested paying a visit to the WOOL radio station in Bellows Falls, also a grassroots station that is now commercial. MUD in Rutland has taken over a for-profit station that was struggling, and is now doing well. Also, with the Town of Ludlow moving forward with an alert system, a radio station would be an enhancement. She assured us we would not be doing this on our own; a lot of people want to be involved.

Noah said that from a Board perspective, there's a lot of overlap, such as shared equipment, requests to record podcasts, etc. Seeing the level of excitement makes him favor embarking on the radio station. He conceded it's a big decision that changes the scope of what OVTV is doing, but said it was apparent there were real commitments by community members. Also, a different audience would tune into radio than TV, so it would spark growth. He suggested the radio and TV stations should be overseen by a joint board, because there are limited resources of people available to serve on boards.

Bob expressed concern about the financial and personnel time needed to run a radio station when it adds work and costs to a budget that is already at a deficit. Patrick responded that most low-power community radio stations are volunteer-run, though the new station would need board oversight, supplies, software, etc. He cited several low-power stations, such as Royalton, which has 1 P/T staff person, and suggested we could ramp up to that. He said no OVTV personnel time could be allocated to the station; Carmine has offered to oversee it at first, coordinate volunteers, etc. He suggested we may want to visit KP, a former p/t employee of ours, who is station manager for a low-power station in Asheville, NC.

Noah said Bob's concerns are valid, and believes we should form an ad hoc committee of interested people to start figuring out logistics such as operating cost, music licensing, etc. Patrick said a Prometheus webinar put the number at \$10-15,000 per year to operate a station. We would need underwriting and private donations. If we get ARPA money, we are committed. Patrick said if we don't do it, we could give the license to another nonprofit and house it at OVTV, because we have the infrastructure. Bob said he would want Patrick to be the point person to the committee but not the chair.

Noah recommended forming the ad hoc Low Power FM Advisory Committee after the elections, during the reorganizational meeting. One person on the board would be on the committee and report back at monthly meetings.

ARPA request: Noah says we could say we are pursuing this mode, looking for a capital contribution for antenna and transmitter, which would be used for communication for emergencies and events. The town could see this as a benefit. Bob suggested we also need a generator if we're going to use the station for an emergency transmitter. Noah said it would be earmarked for this project and if it fell through, the money would go elsewhere. Patrick said we would need to purchase the antenna that would be mounted on a tower, either on Okemo Mountain through the Army Corps of Engineers, or on West Hill through the town. Patrick estimated it costs about \$10k for the transmitter plus a few thousand for an antenna. Lisa suggested the town could make the connection to the generator.

MOTION: George made a motion to approach the town for \$20,000 of ARPA funds for the funding for emergency broadcast purposes. Newt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Director's Report. Patrick's report was submitted by email and people can read.

IV. Building & Grounds Committee Report: The report features a plan/timeline for the final phase of build-out, and fundraising. This line item was skipped for time.

V. Proposal for Incorporating Radio State & Emergency Broadcast Services into Build-Out Plans (see above)

VI. Finance Committee Report: FY24 Budget vs Actuals, Review 1st Draft of FY25 Budget

Bob gave highlights: The bottom line is, the station is running a deficit. Last year, the committee recommended running a deficit while we tried some things, like hiring a grant writer and social media person, to see if they would bring in more revenue. Grant writing – the cost evened out with expected revenue from grants, with some positives in the pipeline. But Bob said a negative \$15k budget is not sustainable. Salaries have been the biggest increase. Cable money went down 3% and will continue. Bob recommended we have a discussion early in the fiscal year about how to make the budget sustainable. Patrick talked about social media and how we need to find ways for it to generate revenue. We spent half as much as last year. Patrick said it would be better for someone to do that in-house with consistency, but it has been effective recently for engagement. He said the goal is to generate money and community engagement, not views. Underwriting and membership need to be increased.

Bob said this will be the budget presented at the Annual Meeting, but future boards should understand this deficit is not sustainable and the station needs more revenue. George pointed out that SAPA and Reading money is still coming in.

VII. Nominating & Elections Committee Report: Recruitment, Public Notices, Election Procedures

We held a successful meeting, and produced more candidates than board seats. Sammy Blanchette, John Eckel, Will Harris, Newt. Rhian is a maybe. Patrick said we will probably end

up with between 6 and 10. \$200 was left in the budget to be spent on refreshments for the Open House.

VIII. Annual Meeting Planning: The Open House, awards reception, and election, will be held on Thursday, June 27, at the station. The Open House and station tours start at 6, with the meeting at 6:30 PM. A week before, the nominations committee needs to put the ballot on Survey Monkey.

IX. Other Business – none.

X. Set / Confirm Next Meeting Date(s) - The Annual Meeting will be held on June 27 at 6 pm

XI. Adjourn. Bob made a motion to adjourn. George seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Noah adjourned the meeting at 7:05 pm .

Respectfully submitted,

*Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt*  
*Secretary*