

Okemo Valley TV

Monthly Board Meeting

Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2022, at 5:30 PM

Okemo Valley TV, 37C Main St., Ludlow, VT and Zoom

Minutes

Present: Noah Schmidt, Newton Rose, Robert Greenawalt, Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, Pat Moore, Wendell Perkins, Patrick Cody, Executive Director, Okemo Valley TV

Zoom: John Cama, Zachary McNaughton

Absent: George O. Thomson

Guest: Melissa Pierce, Head of Government and Regulatory Affairs for Comcast in Vermont.

II. Call Regular Meeting to Order / Review Agenda. Noah called the regular meeting to order at 6:17 PM.

III. Communications/Public Comments. None

IV. Review & Approve Meeting Minutes. Minutes need to be amended because Newt is on both lists of absent and present . With this change, Pat motioned to approve. Bob seconded. Approved.

V. Comcast Contract Renewal – Melissa Pierce, Head of Government and Regulatory Affairs for Comcast in Vermont, attended the meeting to address the draft contract renewal agreement, which would be for a 6-year term. It has the same expiration date as all PEG agreements, one year after certificate of public good expires (Dec. 2027) and based on the template negotiated between Comcast and the VT Access Network. It includes the offer to replace coaxial cable with fiber, in addition to other work. There will be no cost to OVTV in exchange for decommissioning the 3 video return feeds at Cavendish Elementary School, Cavendish Town Hall and Ludlow Town Hall. Noah asked what the holdup is with allowing our channels into Shrewsbury, Andover and Reading, and Melissa said her engineering team said it's not feasible without significant engineering work because they're fed from different hubs. Andover and Reading are fed from the from Springfield hub, and to provide the channels to Andover and Reading would require reconfiguration. They were able to provide PEG channels to Mount Holly, but would have to reconfigure to reach Shrewsbury, which they cannot do.

She explained that Comcast systems are a patchwork acquired from Adelphia, mom-and-pop cable operators acquired through a succession of acquisitions, so technology is aging and inconsistent. There is a hub in Ludlow. Noah confirmed Shrewsbury is served out of Rutland. Melissa said we cannot make a case for the "significant engineering cost" but could not provide specifics of cost, but she said it's too great of an expense to be worth the investment. Patrick asked isn't there a workaround of some sort. Melissa recommended sharing programs thru the

VMX server. Noah said it boggled his mind that Comcast is so big and still using outdated technology. She said they still have legacy systems that haven't been updated.

Patrick asked couldn't the use of an IP encoder and decoder, couldn't Comcast send a system over the internet instead of the hodgepodge cable network. Melissa said the concern is that once it's out there on the internet, Comcast has no control over how it travels, and the quality of the signal will not be good. Patrick pointed out how much we cover in communities like Andover and how much they have grown to depend on us. We provide as much to Andover as Mount Holly and get no PEG fees from Andover. Melissa says Comcast has an extremely small footprint in Andover, less than a dozen homes.

Patrick says OVTV will keep exploring as technology improves. He wants to think longer-term on sharing resources with other stations and he envisions more collaboration down the road, and hopes there will be ways to achieve this. He clarified those towns are designated by just one AMO each, not always the same ones.

Noah mentioned the incomplete work that we've been waiting for and said it seems we're not worth the time. Melissa said if it wasn't cost prohibitive, it would be completed.

Bob asked when the studio feed and RF modulator would be done. Melissa said she had requested on our behalf that the scope of work will include cleaning that up. She has told her engineer to get a detailed estimate for the work. She would need to check with her engineer on time frame. Some could be done right away, but IP encoders may take longer because of supply chain issues with a needed switch; the delivery is not expected until April 2023 (though there might be a few still around). If we come to an agreement she could see if they could move us up and give us a time frame.

Patrick asked about HD, at John's request. Melissa said Comcast plans to start doing this next year. Organizations are being assessed to see what equipment is needed. Some have sufficient fiber and IP encoders while others require more work. With OVTV, if we can reach agreement and do fiber work, that will better position us to convert to HD PEG channels. She will have conversation with Tammy Reilly and Angelike Contis (Vermont Access Network leadership), and they will send out letters laying out the road map and saying what is needed. Bob asked for the latest timeframe this would be done here at OVTV. She reiterated the different levels, and he pressed her, she said definitely in 2023. Bob asked her to get back to us with expected date when she has a green light from the engineering team.

Melissa said she will also work on a side letter about connecting the other towns. She hopes to have an approved letter by the beginning of December. At that point we hope to obtain a signed contract, then Comcast will schedule the repairs and improvements we are owed.

There was some discussion of this after Melissa left the meeting about what can be done and what other stations are doing, esp. with SAPA. Zachary mentioned that Asah, the exec director, is moving on. Woodstock looking for exec dir. OVTV has production needs. Patrick agreed it might be good to have a conversation with SAPA to arrange joint coverage of Reading. Ex. we

would cover, send it to them to go out on their website. Send a bill, possibly split proceeds. They would get the designation.

Director's Report

- a) VTEL and Comcast. Patrick sent the letter approved by the board off to VTEL on making sure they honor the expired contract, and hasn't heard back. However, we received our check, and Asah at SAPA walked in there and confirmed they would be honoring expired contracts.
- b) State appropriation – we have not yet received \$25K. (\$15k is designated to operating, \$10k capital equipment.)
- c) Lightcast – Patrick signed the contract with Lightcast for streaming and it's in process. The cost is \$4,400 annually. Patrick has to do some groundwork so Lightcast streaming platforms, including Apple TV and Roku, and app can launch. It also offers On Demand programming.
- d) Personnel – We have revived discussions about providing minimal services with Woodstock TV, which still has no staff. They are looking for someone to do production work. However, we have the same need, as Sarah is often not available.
- e) Accounting – Wendell has taken over monthly reconciliation work on a trial basis, so we are no longer outsourcing.
- f) Pledge Drive/Live TV – The Pledge Drive/Live TV auction with PA's Way is not happening now. We created the MOU but got no confirmation of its 501©3 status, and the director had other conflicts as well as hesitancy about OVTV's expectations about proven legitimacy as a nonprofit. We had also changed fundraising percentages to 60/40. Our attorney, Janice Graham, said we could jeopardize our own 501©3 if we solicit donations for another org that's not technically charitable. However, we now have a working MOU that we can apply to future projects if we desire.
- g) Elections – Elections went smoothly, candidates' forums, debates, etc.
- h) Lots of interesting productions – One is Lisa's *Creating Healthy Waterfronts*. Zachary mentioned there are grants related to educational promotional media for clean watersheds, possibly Department for Environmental Conservation or Regional Planning and the Arts Council of Vermont.
- i) Volunteers – We are working o foster a crew of volunteers who can work in a collaborative environment. A new volunteer named Ian Bard, who wants to acquire new skills, is working on a script for some Fireman's Auction footage that George Thomson shot over Labor Day. Also, new volunteer Becky Wynne is coming in tomorrow to do VO work.
- j) The Ralph and Leo Show – Longtime Ludlow resident Ralph Pace had 300 episodes of *That Was the Week That Was*, often with co-host Leo Graham, longtime Chester resident. Ralph, almost 90, now lives in Rutland and Leo moved back to Milwaukee. Ralph still does a show occasionally, called *Spotlight*, and wanted to do post-election segment with Leo via Zoom. Leo drove here to surprise Ralph last week. Happened last week. Lisa needs to put on Linked In.

VI. Financial Report:

Report Attached, of Budget, 1st quarter profit and loss. Nothing notable to report.

VII. Other Committee Reports.

- a. Community Engagement – Lisa summarized the Community Engagement meeting, in particular that we are trying to sign up underwriters. She will send a list of potential underwriters to the Board and asks people to claim those with which they have some connection. A one-sheet is being created which Patrick will have early next week. Board members can pick them up to take to prospects, and use them as talking points. The goal is to get this accomplished in early November.
- b. We want to create postcards for event tables and field producers to make available, but agreed to wait till Lightcast is rolled out so we have the most updated info on the cards.
- c. We also discussed other branding opportunities, such as giving out swag such as pens with our name and logo (we agreed the URL was not necessary), perhaps mugs or bags. Noah asked about the possibility of an OVTV watermark for Zoom? Or graphic? Talk of OVTV acronym and buying domain.

VII. Other Business.

- d. Review mission, vision and strategic plan outline, policy review work. This was on the agenda but we ran out of time.

VIII. Confirm Next Meeting Date. The next meeting will be held on Dec. 8, 2022, at 5:30 PM.

IX. Adjourn. Noah Schmidt adjourned the meeting at 7:08 PM.

Minutes submitted by Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, filling in for George O. Thomson, secretary, who was absent.