



“State of the Station” Annual Summary July 2021 – June 2022

Administrative / Personnel

- We experienced a lot of changes this past year, with turnover, losses, and gains both with staff and the Board of Directors.
- We lost Fred Marin, who passed away in September. Fred was our Programming Coordinator since 2014 and, prior to that, had been on the Board of Directors. He was a longtime and loyal supporter of the station, first as a volunteer, and then as a valued staff member.
- The facility went back to operating under normal business hours in 2021, after COVID shut down our normal operations for much of the previous year. During that period, there was also a steady transition away from fully remote productions and back to in-person. With these changes came the need to ramp our staffing back up. We needed more production help. Prior to 2020, we had consistently employed at least one part-time production staff person, who was responsible for covering government meetings and community events, as well as some post-production / editing work. During the Summer of 2021, we began our search for such a person. In September, we hired Rebekah Ferreira. She was recommended by Board member Zachary McNaughton, who is the Audio-Video Production department head at River Valley Technical Center. Rebekah was a former student of his. We soon brought her into a full-time role. In addition to doing the production work, she started doing more with program scheduling and production coordination.
- Eric Chatterjee left in December, to take a job at Dartmouth College. He was our Production Coordinator for the last few years. His departure meant that Rebekah took over his role with coordinating & scheduling all of the various productions.
- With the loss in staffing and increased workloads, we had a need for more help with program scheduling. Will Harris resigned from the Board of Directors and was hired as a part-time scheduler in February.
- In May, we hired two college students as temporary staff members - Gavin Greenawalt & Sarah Bennett. Gavin, a film major at Champlain College, will be starting his Senior year at Champlain College in August. Sarah, who was also a student of Mr. McNaughton's Audio-Video Production class at RVTC, completed her Freshman year at Bennington College and is taking a Semester off and is planning to re-enroll in February. This means we have her until then. Both Gavin & Sarah are doing field production work for us, as well as editing & post-production processing.
- There were 3 resignations from the Board of Directors. As mentioned, Will Harris resigned order to take the part-time position. Then, in April, Susan Haefner resigned after her acting career took back off, with the re-opening of live theatre. And finally, in June, Sharon Huntley
- We had poned new member join the Board; Wendell Perkins was appointed in February, following Will's resignation. Whereas Susan & Sharon's resignations came closer to the end of the fiscal year, the Board decided not to appoint those seats, leaving them to be filled through the annual election.

Financial Support & Advocacy Work

- Thank you to the Towns of Ludlow, Plymouth, Cavendish, and Mount Holly for the annual support through budget appropriations. In total, \$4,250 was raised through this support.
- Thank you to our underwriters this past year- Heritage Family Credit Union, HWC Financial, Little Yellow House Studio, Marylou Scofield, Esquire; William Raevis / Vermont Properties, & VTel. In total, \$3,500 was received.
- We received \$925 in membership contributions. Thank you to those individuals who have supported us as members!
- Thanks to the ongoing work of our Statewide membership organization, the Vermont Access Network (VAN), & to our advocates in the legislature, each of the 24 PEG Access stations received \$12,500 as a budget appropriation from the State of Vermont. This was approved in the FY2022 budget adjustment. There is also a \$25,000 appropriation that was approved as part of the State budget for FY2023, which we will receive in the coming year.
- The advocacy work continues, as VAN looks further out at the bigger picture of the changing world and possible revenue streams to support our collective work. In my mind, collaboration – on regional & statewide levels- is a key ingredient to our long-term sustainability. Equally important is maintaining a local presence in the communities that we serve. Being “hyper local” must always be central to our work.

Production & Programming

- Last year (FY21), the bulk of the production work was over remote platforms, primarily using Zoom video conferencing. Then the migration over to “hybrid” formats began, which is where we are now. “Hybrids” are here to stay.
- With the migration over to hybrid productions, there was a trial & error learning curve, as we experimented with processes & equipment. And thanks to being part of a membership organization where others are all in the same boat, we had the opportunity to learn & share knowledge, tips & tricks together.
- Thanks to persistent outreach and with support from VAN and VLCT, we were able to convince several of the Towns to use ARPA (American Recovery Protection Act) funds for permanent AV set ups to support hybrid meetings & events. We provided consultation & assistance, and those systems are now being set up in Ludlow, Plymouth, Mount Holly, and possibly soon in Cavendish & Andover.
- Picking up from where we left off, we continued with collaborative productions with SAPA-TV, in our shared territory of Green Mountain Union High School. We teamed up to coverage Green Mountain Union District Board meetings, as well as GM’s graduation.
- GM Soccer season coverage- Amy Mosher, of Chester, volunteered to record all boys’ soccer games (up until the State semi-final game) and several girls’ games. Due to an agreement the Vermont Principal’s Association has with an outside contractor (NFHS Network), other cameras were not allowed at the Championship Game.
- Production for hire: We took on a few production-for-hire jobs in FY22. Last Summer, we were hired by the Two Rivers Supervisory Union’s “Go Wild” Summer camp to run a 7-week video camp, using iPhones with gimbals, Go Pros, and drones. TRSU purchased some of the equipment, with the idea that we would use it in future after school and Summer camp programs. In August, the Lake Rescue Association hired us to produce their Annual Meeting in a hybrid format (we are doing this again for them this August). And then in the Spring, we started a

project for hire with Two Rivers Ottauquechee Regional Commission, producing a series of flood resiliency and educational videos.

- Other programming outreach: We continued to reach out to local people who are distributing video online to solicit programming. There are more & more people doing this, on their own. Some of them are using Zoom or other video conferencing applications, and others are recording with a more “traditional” camera set up. This outreach has resulted in an increase in programming. Examples are the West River Weather Guy’s bi-weekly forecasts, Liza Eaton’s virtual yoga classes, Sustainable Woodstock’s “Green Drinks” series, VNH’s “Let’s Talk” health education series, & others.
- Meeting Coverage: We covered an average of 16 meetings per month, between the various Selectboards, Planning Commissions, and school boards. Some of these were back to fully in-person, but most were either hybrid or fully remote. And with the prevalence of remote meetings, we are now carrying more local government meetings than ever. Over the past year, we began receiving Reading Planning Commission meetings as well as the monthly school board meetings from Windsor Central Supervisory Union.
- Divided Sky Fun Run: through a combination of staff & volunteer support, we produced a short video of the Divided Sky Foundation’s “Fun Run”, which took place in Ludlow in May. Due to the Foundation’s extensive network of supporters, the video was seen far & wide, garnering quite a bit of attention.
- Outside of our meeting coverage for local municipalities & School Districts, here are organizations for whom we provided pro bono production services during FY2021: Okemo Valley Chamber of Commerce, Calvin Coolidge Presidential Foundation, Mount Holly Conservation Trust, Mount Holly Community Historical Museum, Cavendish Community & Conservation Association, Cavendish Fletcher Community Library, Black River Action Team, Ludlow Recreation Committee, Green Mountain UHS, Expeditionary School at Black River, Ludlow Elementary School, Mount Holly School, Cavendish Town Elementary School, Chester-Andover Elementary School, Woodstock Union High School, Bridgewater Historical Society, & Divided Sky Foundation.

Improvements & Upgrades

- 24/7 live streaming: Live “linear” (24/7) streaming of our TV channels has long been part of the plans. As the viewing audience is increasingly online, rather than on cable TV, linear streaming gives viewers the opportunity to “tune in” to the channels as they are seen on TV (in addition to watching video-on-demand). The hope is that it would open up new opportunities for engagement and possibly even funding sources. While our broadcast / playout server vendor sells & supports equipment for this purpose, I decided to go a different & less costly route, using our You Tube channel as a platform, and free open source streaming software (OBS) running on a dedicated computer. I enlisted the help of a former River Valley Technical Center (RVTC) student, Marley Greenslet, to custom build the first of these computer, and last Summer, we went live with the 24/7 stream of the Community Channel. After monitoring it and working out some kinks, we were ready for the Education / Government channel. The building of that computer was assigned as a RVTC IT class project for a Senior, Riley Ward. We went live with that stream in April. Within a couple of months, we ran into problems with 24/7 streaming on You Tube. The streams were taken down as I evaluated next steps.
- In addition to the streaming, we now also have an “OTT” (over the top) channel on Roku. It is available through our master control server vendor Tigtrope – it is called “Cablecast Screenwave”.

So anyone with Roku can download Cablecast Screenwave (for free) and, from anywhere, watch OVTV video-on-demand (the same local programs that are available for viewing on our website). This is just the first step we are making in the world of OTT. I believe the future will include a more robust involvement & presence on OTT platforms (Apple TV, Fire TV, etc.).

Community Engagement / Marketing & Outreach

- Program Highlights e-newsletters: With the help of our marketing contractor, Wendy Reynolds, we have been publishing regular e-news blasts. Our mailing list, while modest (approx. 250 legitimate subscribers), has a good open & click rate (over the past year, the email open rates have ranged between 35-40%). This was our primary form of regular outreach.
- Local Program Highlights in Newspapers: We began a new partnership with the weekly Vermont Journal, publicizing weekly program highlights in a bullet-list format.
- Social Media: We continue to have issues with Facebook, whereby a glitch in the algorithms impedes the reach of our posts. As such, while we still use the platform as an outreach tool, there is less emphasis than there once was. Instead, we tend to use Instagram more these days (which, ironically, is owned by Facebook / Meta). Our Instagram reach continues to grow – we ended the year with more than 650 followers.
- You Tube: Our subscribers steadily grew over the year, as videos were viewed & widely shared.
- Regional Collaboration: As noted above (under “Financial Support & Advocacy Work”), collaboration is going to be a key ingredient to our long-term health. For the past several years, we have been part of conversations, both internally on the Board level, and among our neighboring colleagues, about ways in which we can work together to pool resources and create some economic efficiencies. During the latter part of FY2021, conversations ramped up with Woodstock Community TV (WCTV). The WCTV Board made a request, to hire us for some production work during the months of May & June 2022. They also were interested in hiring us to provide some administrative services and to handle program scheduling. Our Board agreed to take on the production work through the end of June but did not feel that we were prepared to take on the other, more substantial work on short notice. The feeling was we needed a longer-term commitment and more detail.
- We are pleased to announce this year’s community producer & volunteer award recipients:
 - Outstanding Achievement Award: Dr. Linda Thomson (Harry the Hypnotamus: “Harry Goes to Save the Children of Ukraine”)
 - Community Service Award: Liza Eaton (“Yoga with Liza” virtual yoga series)
 - Producer of the Year: Amy Mosher (for coverage of GMUHS soccer)
 - Best Youth Programming: Kata Welch (for “Story Time”)