



## Director Report

### December 2021

#### Personnel / Administrative

- Eric has left the building, which leaves some slack to be pulled. Rebekah & I are managing all of the daily operational work between the two of us, between the coordinating of productions, doing the actual productions, scheduling programming, etc. In a way, I am thankful that this has been a relatively quiet month. There are very few productions scheduled outside of the meeting coverage (but to be clear: we do a lot of meetings). I am also thankful to have had some volunteer support with the meetings. Unless we get some more production help soon, things will become more challenging, as both my time and Rebekah's will be stretched all over the place, between the daytime and evening work.
- With my time spent more heavily on daily operations, I have not been able to focus as much on administrative & strategic work. While that is problematic, it has been good for me to have "boots on the ground" and working hands on with the equipment, training Rebekah, and making some operational and workflow adjustments
- That said, I have been inching the pebble forward the best I can with a few of our initiatives. These include the building project, our regional underwriting idea, and the shared staffing idea. More on these items below.
- Staffing- the most pressing immediate need is to get part-time or freelance production help. Thanks to Zach McNaughton for spreading the word among his students in the AV program at River Valley Technical Center. I have also talked with Trevor Barlow at Black River Innovation Campus. And I have been plugging the concept of shared production staffing among our regional partners – especially SAPA and CATV.
- Financial Update: I met with Wendell Perkins a couple of weeks ago. He is interested in providing support in a volunteer advisory role, especially in relation to our overall financial portfolio, including investments in consideration of short & long-term goals. He has offered to join me in meeting with the investment advisor from Heritage Family Credit Union, to see what they can offer.

#### Programming & Production

- The meeting coverage continues. A good portion of the meetings are now being done as hybrids, and it is helpful to have a 2-person crew at the larger ones (of which there are about 6 per month). The addition of the AV system in some of the sites (more on that below) will help with the workflow and reduce the overall staff time required.
- Next Monday, Rebekah & I will be recording 2<sup>nd</sup> graders reading The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, next door at LES. We will turn that production around quickly so that people can see it in time for the holiday.
- On Tuesday & Wednesday of next week, we will once again be recording in the studio (it has not been seeing a lot of action of late). Kata Welch from the Cavendish Library comes in on Tuesday to do her regular promotional segment for the library as well as some of her "Story Time" readings. Then on Wednesday, Susan Haefner will be interviewing parents of students from the Expeditionary School at Black River, for a promotional video.
- Speaking of Susan, we received a few Christmas music videos that she recorded last year with her friend and music collaborator, Lisa Brigantino. (Thanks, Susan!). We'll be playing them throughout the coming week, along with a selection of other local holiday programming.

## Community Engagement

- Underwriting: The shared underwriting concept has been promoted again to the other Windsor County stations (SAPA, Woodstock Community TV, CATV, Windsor-on-Air), and I am trying to get that moving in the right direction & gaining traction. In the meantime, we need to be reaching out to prospective local businesses about sponsorship in 2022. Now is the time for that. Sharon has worked on a brochure to help market the underwriting program and has asked everyone to review it. The end result should be both a physical brochure that can be left with businesses, as well as an electronic version that can be emailed, posted to the website, etc. The campaign should include some plugs on social media as well. We need to review our lists and finalize our plan. We will use time during this week's meeting for that.
- John Cama announced that his wife, Marylou Scofield, will be renewing as an underwriter for 2022, through her legal practice.
- I am working on a revamped strategy for our social media usage with Rebekah. Our social media activity has been relatively stagnant of late, with not much engagement. Part of this is because of a long-standing problem with our Facebook page that can't seem to get resolved. But we also have an Instagram feed, on which we are fairly active, as well as Twitter, where we are far less active. I'd like to see us to be using IGTV for pushing our videos on Instagram. This is an area we need to be. Rebekah & I will be focusing some energy there.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Promotion: With 2021 coming to a close, so is our 20th anniversary. As I've mentioned, I have the idea for a way to celebrate it, through some marketing, with a story about our humble beginnings and the "through line" narrative of History Day. Unfortunately, time has not been on my side to get this accomplished, at least not in the larger way I had envisioned. Instead, I am using it in our e-news over the next few weeks, breaking the longer story into short profile pieces.
- AV Equipment for Hybrid Meetings: This has also been inching forward. A new system in Ludlow Town Hall will be installed soon (for both the auditorium and conference rooms). Mount Holly is looking to install a system in its Town Office this winter. And a system will be installed in the Plymouth Town Office building, but since there will soon be a major renovation project, they may decide to coordinate the timing of the installation with that larger project. Discussions continue with Andover, but that job has a little more to it, since they first need to address acoustics in the Town Hall, which have proven to be problematic for remote participants of meetings.
- Town Appropriation Requests: I have submitted our requests to Ludlow (\$2200) and Cavendish (\$750), with Plymouth & Mount Holly to follow later this week. I missed the Andover deadline, which was last week. This would have been our first time requesting funds from Andover.
- Apprenticeship: We continue to work with a student from the Expeditionary School at Black River. He is working with us 2 afternoons per week, which has been going well.
- RVTC Partnership: We are once again working with Kristen Wilson' IT program at River Valley Tech Center. Her class is both the creative and technical side of IT. A few years ago, her students participated in a logo design contest for us, and one of them actually won (Cameron Purington, a 2018 graduate). The logo we have today is his design. I reached out to Kristen this time around for a technical IT job, to see if they would be interested in building our 2<sup>nd</sup> streaming server (for the Education / Government channel), and to assist with our local networking. She has assigned this work to one of her students, a senior, who will be coming this Friday to get started. Working with RVTC is a great partnership for us.
- Memberships: we received membership contributions from George Thomson (thanks, George!) and Amy Stack. Amy's contribution came by way of Jane Hart, who paints portraits for people and rather than accept payment, she asks people to make a donation to a short list of local organizations, including us. Amy responded that she really appreciated the coverage of Green Mountain HS sports.

## Facility & Equipment

- Cost Estimate: We have a proposal from Henry Erickson, an independent construction consultant, for cost estimation services. I will review this with the Board at the meeting, in hopes that we can move forward. Henry's proposal is a "not to exceed" fee of \$2,125. An independent cost estimation will allow us to update our budget, devise a plan for financing the project, and to seek funding opportunities.
- Community Facilities grant: I decided not to submit the USDA Rural Development grant application prior to the December 17<sup>th</sup> deadline. I do not have the time it would require to produce a strong application, nor would we have had the construction estimate in time. There will be other opportunities. But first thing is first: let's get that cost estimate, review our funding situation, and update the project budget. At that point would be the time to pursue grant and other funding opportunities.
- Building Project Notes: During my prep work for the grant application, I met with Town Manager Scott Murphy to go over the remainder of the interior work we want to complete, as well as the exterior work we would like to see get completed. He expressed his interest & willingness to work with us to address those needs. He even got an updated estimate for the paving part of the project, so we now have that. I also spoke with BR Good Neighbors' Executive Director, Krey Kellington, who expressed interest in getting involved as well. It seems we may have the critical mass needed to address the exterior work (drainage / site work / paving), whether or not we are able to roll that into work a larger grant application, or if it becomes its own stand-alone project.
- New Equipment: I purchased two new portable audio mixers for use during meetings and other productions where we are using more than 2 microphones. These new units are automatic mixers, meaning they automatically mix the sound levels, using voice activation. These will prove to be very useful to us, especially during hybrid meetings, where we have so many different elements to handle and equipment to operate. So not having to worry about mixing microphone levels individually will help.
- Streaming Server: Last year, we went live with our a streaming one of our channels 24/7 through You Tube (the Community channel – i.e. Comcast 1076 & VTEL 166). This enables people to "tune in" to the channel online (in addition to viewing video on demand through the website and/or You Tube channel). After some trials & tribulations, we have that working steadily, and we are ready to launch the other channel. As noted above, the RVTC class is helping with this.

## VAN

- VAN's Budget Request: there has been a lot of activity on the advocacy & legislative fronts. VAN has formally requested nearly a \$1 million appropriation in the State's FY2023 Budget. To garner the support of this request, VAN has been conducting meetings with various legislators who serve on key committees. I met with Logan Nicoll, the local Rep. for Ludlow-Mount Holly-Shrewsbury, who is a supporter of ours and sits on the House Commerce & Economic Development Committee, which is important to our request. Another local Rep., Charlie Kimbell (Woodstock-Plymouth-Reading) is the Vice Chair of that Committee (and also chairs the Rural Economic Development working group). A meeting is also being set up with him in the near future. The groundwork for this legislative support has already been laid, over the last few years, through the consistent advocacy work that is being done through a VAN working group, in consultation with Action Circles. The PEG Access Funding study was completed, and last year we all received COVID Relief Funds. Both of these happened through legislative support.