



Director Report March 2025

Administrative

- Legislative Advocacy: To recap, VAN's million request for FY2026 was included in the Governor's budget, but not as the full \$1.35m; instead, due to an oversight, what's in the Governor's budget is a \$1.3m appropriation. The House Gov. Ops. & Military Affairs Committee supported the budget bill and voted it out of committee unanimously (11-0). It then went onto the House Appropriations Committee, which put the \$500K back into VAN's appropriation, to bring it back up to \$1.35m, and then voted the House version of the bill out of their committee. It will go to a full House vote then onto the Senate. By the way, the lone local State Rep. on either committee is VL Coffin (Cavendish-Weathersfield-Baltimore), who is on the House Gov. Ops. & Military Affairs.
- Personnel Policies: The Personnel Committee is due to take on the next step in the Personnel Policy work, on drafts for policies that are to be added and that we don't currently have on the books
- Operating Policies & Procedures: The next step was to be a 2nd reading & consideration of adoption, and a 1st reading of the third policy ("Membership"). It will once again be on the agenda for the upcoming meeting. The draft document can be found [here](#).
- Strategic Planning: Wendell & I briefly discussed this. Whereas we don't seem to have the bandwidth to do a larger overhaul of a plan, perhaps instead we can try to accomplish some boiled-down facsimile of that. The fact of the matter is that things have changed, the organization is evolving, and will continue to do so. Some of the "bigger picture" existential questions, goals, and strategies should be addressed (for example, it was brought up in a recent meeting that we should be considering a re-brand). It could be done in one session, as a retreat, outside of our normal meeting environment. We are proposing to try to do this sometime in May.
- Nominating & Elections: As we enter the final quarter of the year, this work needs to be addressed immediately. There are 3 Board seats with terms up on June 30th (those which are held by Wendell, Bob, and Lisa). The work of the Nominating & Elections Committee is to address this, while evaluating the Board's needs (including the ideal number of seats for next year), and making any recommendations to the Board prior to posting notices about the upcoming election (which we are required to do). I believe Newt & Stefan make up this committee.
- Annual Meeting: We will likely need to try to hold the Annual Meeting a little earlier in June this year. The Board should set a date for this & begin planning for the event.
- Staffing: Rebekah will be on leave starting sometime in June; she will be out for at least 8 weeks, and then planning to return on a part-time basis. Currently, we have Sarah & Elia who each work approx. half time (Elia is almost entirely remote). When Rebekah returns (likely in early September), she will be doing some on site and some remote

work. By that point, we will likely need to have someone else taking over a portion of her coordinator & manager tasks. This is currently a fluid situation, with some different factors in play, and is being addressed. I hope to have this settled ASAP, so that Rebekah can be on hand to train someone.

Finance

- FY2026 Budget Work: We need to have a draft of a budget ready for the April Board meeting. This will allow for the time for any necessary revisions prior to the Board taking it up for a vote at the Annual Meeting in June.
- Banking Change: We have 2 different sets of checking & savings accounts - one set of them is with M&T, and the other with Heritage Family Credit Union. To simplify things, we are closing out the accounts at one of our institutions (M&T), and moving the funds to the other (Heritage), thereby consolidating our accounts.
- Cash flow: In the bank currently, we have \$10,158 at M&T Bank; \$10,560 at Heritage, and \$92,246 in Fidelity.

WLUD-LP

- Laying the Groundwork: Thanks to the Board's approval, given at the special meeting on March 5th, we can now move forward with plans for the build out of the physical space for WLUD ("Black River Radio"). The committee will be meeting sometime during the next couple of weeks; chairperson Michelle Stinson is organizing that. The focus will be on reviewing the spatial needs for the station as well as a list of specific equipment to be purchased in the near future. A written report will be submitted to the Board summarizing the current status & recent progress.

Buildings & Grounds

- Building Project: Mark Blachard of VIS Construction Consultants is available to work for us and has offered to do so at a reduced rate, due to his support of our mission (he is a longtime Board member of SAPA-TV). Again, the work needed in order to move this project forward is to present options for us to complete some of the construction work ASAP; his scope of work would include, first & foremost, design / architectural work (amending our existing floor plans to show what has been completed vs what remains to be done , in alignment with our ["Building Program"](#)).
- Funding / Finance Plan: We still don't have consensus on / support for a finance plan for the final phase of the 15+ year build-out. Last year, we raised \$36,000 in grants, which need to be used this year. We are to match that with \$36,000 from our own coffers. As a reminder, we have at least that amount as part of our "building fund", which is presently sitting in our Fidelity account.
- Rotary Grant: The Ludlow Rotary Club has informed me that the 2024 grant we received (\$3,000) must be spent by the end of April. The question before them is whether or not that can be used for architectural/ design work / construction management fees or if it needs to be on actual construction ("bricks & mortar"). The main contact person for the grant is Brigid Sullivan, who is a former Board member and is familiar with the long

history of our building project (as she was closely involved with it during the early years, from about 2009 - 2015).

Production & Programming

- Town Meetings: Town Meeting Coverage went well overall. It was a lot of work, having 6 meetings to cover, with 5 of them live streamed (4 of which were also simultaneously televised live). We benefited from having 2 of them on the previous Saturday (Reading & Cavendish), with “only” 4 to do that Monday night. The one major(ish) problem we had was a networking & internet issue that is plaguing the Ludlow Town Hall Auditorium. We were unable to stream and televise the meeting live as planned, and I had to improvise in order to get the Zoom up & running, to support the hybrid format. (more on this problem below, under “Municipal Support”).
- Ludlow Village Meeting: We will also be streaming & broadcasting the Ludlow Village Annual Meeting this coming Tuesday, which incidentally is the same night as our Board meeting (and which is why Newt will have to leave our meeting early, as he is the moderator for both the Town & the Village).
- Pro Bono Community Productions: This past month, we have provided coverage of the following events: Open House for “Create Together at Fletcher Farm”; the “Mom Prom”, for “Neighbors Together”; Guest Speaker at Ludlow Rotary Club, and “Help Vermont’s Native Plants Thrive”, a presentation from Black River ACTION Team, the VT Agency of Natural Resources, & VT River Conservancy.
- Studio Use: Over the past month, the studio has been used to create programming by Neighbors Together (“Talk with Paula”), the “Average Daves” (for their TV & Movie talk), a couple of the local State Representatives (VL Coffin & Tom Charlton), and former Ludlow Municipal Manager Frank Heald. In addition, we do the regular “Legislative Update” series with State Rep. Charlie Kimbell and the VT Standard’s senior staff writer Tom Ayres (these are recorded over Zoom).
- Other Local Programming: It should be mentioned, as a reminder, that many community members & organizations continue to submit programming to us. Three local churches - United Church of Ludlow, St. James Methodist Church, & Calvary Church - as well as the Catholic Diocese of Burlington, send us recordings of their weekly services (at some point over the last year, Ludlow Baptist Church stopped sending us the recordings of their services, after 15+ years). These come to us year-round. Other perennial regular programming includes Sustainable Woodstock’s “Green Drinks” series (mostly webinars on a variety of topics related to ecology & sustainability - incidentally, Peter’s wife Heather is the Program Coordinator for Sustainable Woodstock). Lately, we have also had the Innkeepers’ weekly ski races from Pat Moore, as well as Tec Gym Sports’ coverage of local youth sports (including recent basketball tournaments from next door at the Ludlow Community Center), a series of short ski stories with Ski Vermont, from Stefan & Wendy’s Red Vault Productions. We also have the periodic behind-the-scenes vignettes from Woodstock Union High School’s theater program (You Theater), produced by Claire. The weekly series from Phill Gattenby has had quite an impact, where he tours all of VT’s 100 covered bridges. Phill lives in Brattleboro but is a member of Vermont Covered Bridge Society, which is an organizational member of ours. We helped Phill get his series off of

the ground and he has since done quite a bit of the editing at Okemo Valley TV. We also receive what I call the “one-offs”, or stand-alones- programs that are not part of a series. A recent example of this would be a promotional video from the Divided Sky Foundation.

Community Engagement & Support

- Re-Engaging with Community Engagement: Donna has offered to attend the Board meeting for the Community Engagement agenda item, to help review where things are and to help chart next steps.
- Underwriting: The only update I am aware of is that Stefan had a conversation with Johnny from Johnny’s Kitchen, who has once again expressed interest in becoming an underwriter. A follow-up is needed.