Okemo Valley TV
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, February 25, 2025, at 5:15 PM EDT

Minutes

Present: Wendell Perkins, Stefan J. Beaumont, Patrick Cody, Executive Director, Okemo Valley TV

Present on Zoom: Robert Greenawalt, Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, Sammy Blanchette

Absent: Newton Rose, Claire McKey Berkman

Guests: Michelle Stinson, Black River Radio; Evan Parks, Bellows Community Radio WOOL

I. Call to Order / Review Agenda. Wendell Perkins called the meeting to order at 520 PM

II. Communications / Public Comments - There were none.

III. Review & Approve Meeting Minutes (Jan. 28) Wendell made a motion to approve the minutes from the Jan. 28, 2025, meeting. Sammy seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. WLUD-LP Community Radio Status Report and Discussion of Radio Project & Consideration of Approval –

   A. Michelle Stinson, current chair of the radio committee, submitted a report. She said 9 people attended a radio meeting last week. She said the group is ready to move forward to get an engineering report for changes needed to put antennae at the Okemo shed instead of the original location in the FCC license application, which was by Okemo Valley TV. The group is asking for the town to reimburse with ARPA funds allocated to us. Patrick and Carmine are working with FCC changes. The frequency is changing with the tower location change. It was 104.7; the group is now petitioning for 93.3.

   B. Patrick and Michelle presented the rest of the info, primarily Patrick: Vermont community grant for radio - legislation has been presented to bring 10 radio stations into a funding situation, and WLUD is on the list.

   C. The Vermont Community Radio Network has started doing advocacy, trying to get a state grant that would fund us to buy equipment if we did daily emergency alerts and committed to other emergency preparedness items such as PSAs. A larger portion, $25,000, would go to established stations and $10,000 would go to smaller start-ups.

   D. Patrick displayed a 3-year pro forma budget projection. 2026 is the start-up year so expenses would be greater. Lisa expressed concern that the Board was now overseeing underwriting and memberships for radio in addition to TV. Michelle responded that that's appropriate since the FCC license is in the OVTV name. Bob said he is concerned that others should be running the radio station, and fears Patrick will end up running both. Patrick responded that PEG is stale, funding sources are dwindling, and he sees radio as a real opportunity to get people engaged, create Community Media to meet people where they are. He said the radio station is to be all volunteer, pointing out that WOOL in Bellows Falls is 20 years old, started as an all-volunteer station. He said radio would be more accessible and attract a different group of people than community television. He also said he thought radio would offer a great opportunity to attract new underwriting, since the signal goes to Clairmont (he mentioned car dealers there as potential underwriters). Evan Parks, representing WOOL, said his experience was that radio would bring more people into the organization. Wendell said there has been an enormous amount of work done in the background. He said he feels the expense side is well grounded and a lot of research has been done. He doesn't feel it will put OVTV at risk. He said, "We need to define what we're going to do and move forward." Sammy said he sees it as an opportunity to tie community radio into TV and be proactive going forward.

E. Patrick shared the timeline for radio as a flow chart in the Google drive.
F. On funding, Evan talked about WOOL's fundraisers - the station holds 3 or 4 big events (bringing in $1,500-$2,000 apiece) annually, plus merch sales and general info at a table at the Chester Fall Festival. He said the station has 20 underwriters, 6 or 8 of which are in-kind donations. $150 for 6 months, $200 a year. 138 members, $60 is basic membership and $100 sustaining.
G. Bob asked if we have decided that Patrick was the lead to bring the station online. Patrick said perhaps he jumps in a lot and is the glue that holds it together, and has the necessary connections and involvement. He said he thought it was more efficient to have one organizational budget, OVTV's, with WLUD Radio as a category. Wendell emphasized that Patrick will not do the day-to-day running of radio, just oversight. He shared an organizational chart that has the Board at the top, then Patrick, divided off to TV (staff) and Radio (volunteer) station managers. Michelle says there are 50 people on the email list of interested supporters, with 20 consistently responding. Evan said WOOL doesn't have a station manager. It's run by a team of volunteer leaders, each with expertise in an area -- secretary, tech team, treasurer, programming schedule, etc. – that meets once a month to make decisions as a team. He said when people host a show, they have a requirement for volunteer hours. Wendell asked how active the board is, how many hours people work to keep the volunteer-run station going. Evan says he and others work 5-8 hours a week. Patrick pointed out that Board members don't have to put in these hours. Bob expressed discomfort with the process and what still needs to be discussed, including housing the station, security and 24/7 programming logistics. We need to vote on having this station and housing it. Where is it going to be housed? Lisa pointed out that the original discussion of the station emphasized not burdening the board or staff with additional work, or

having the TV station suffer, and in fact radio has hijacked every meeting and Patrick has given a huge amount of time and energy. She mentioned the possibility of growing the size of the board by 1 and having one person dedicated to the radio station.

H. Wendell asked Evan if the numbers we have are realistic. Evan and Michelle said OVTV had a lot of advantages in having tech-savvy people, a probable location, motivated volunteers with experience, etc. Wendell suggested having a special meeting to vote on the radio station, since Sammy had left and only three board members remained. He said we need to try to get all 7 together since this is an important decision for the Board. The decision was made to hold the meeting this week. *(Addendum: The meeting was set for Wed., March 5 at 5:15 PM.)*

V. Review of Building Project Status: Funding Sources & Proposed Next Steps -

A. Bob said the building upgrade plan will cost $180,000, and we don't have it. So where do we go from there? We have a $12,000 grant, a $24,000 grant that is contingent upon the whole building buildout, and he's uncomfortable pulling money out of reserves without better understanding of what will happen with Comcast. So he doesn't know what we have to use with the building fund. Patrick talked about pulling $36,000 out of reserve and $50,000 in additional grant money. Wendell agreed that we are not in the position to use the cash on hand to any great degree. He said community engagement had some ideas. Patrick said he considers that $36K in reserves is for the building fund. Patrick said Donna recommended going for $50K if we can get a $25K donation. OVTV plans to try to leverage the relationship with Bruce Schmidt at Okemo Mountain Resort, a Ludlow native and friend of the station, whose son Noah used to be Board president and is now a Ludlow trustee. Sammy had suggested taking Bruce out to launch and asking for $25K. Community Engagement also plans to approach the businesses such as Shaw's, Aubuchon's, and other bigger businesses.

B. Wendell suggested the meeting with Bruce should happen after we vote on the radio station so that we know what our full identity is. Wendell said analysts say Comcast will decline 5% per year till 2030. VTEL numbers are stable. With the trend of PEG fee declines, we are estimated to run out of cash in fiscal 2028.

VI. Community Engagement Update: Patrick already mentioned underwriting, campaign for building. Lisa mentioned other things discussed at the meeting, such as asking Board members to each ensure they bring in a certain amount each year, and creating big fundraising events such as a music festival or a pickleball tournament that would also raise visibility. There was no time to finish this portion of the report.

VII. Financial Report: FY2025 State funding shortfall, cable /revenue projections, starting work on FY2026 budget – tabled

VIII. Personnel Policies: review of draft revisions to existing policies - we decided we would vote on the committee's recommended policies at the next meeting.

IX. Review Status of Strategic Planning & Consider Next Steps - tabled

X. Review Status of Operating Policies & Procedures & Consider Adoption of Work to Date tabled

XI. Other Business - none

XII. Confirm Dates for Next Meetings -

   A. Special meeting to consider radio station and personnel and operating policies, numbers 9 and 11 on the agenda. Patrick will send a doodle to schedule on 5, 10, or 11.
   B. Next Meeting Date. The next Board meeting was set for March 25, 2025, at 515 PM EDT.

XIII. Adjournment. Lisa made a motion to adjourn. Stefan seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Wendell adjourned the meeting at 6:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt
Secretary