Okemo Valley TV
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, January 28, 2025, at 5:15 PM EDT

Minutes

Present: Wendell Perkins, Newton Rose, Claire McKey Berkman, Patrick Cody, Executive Director, Okemo Valley TV

Present on Zoom: Robert Greenawalt, Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt, Stefan J. Beaumont

Absent: Sammy Blanchette

Guest: Michelle Stinson, Black River Radio

I. Call to Order / Review Agenda Wendell called the meeting to order at 5:18 PM

II. Communications / Public Comments - none.

III. Review & Approve Meeting November 19 Minutes: Claire made a motion to approve the Minutes. Lisa seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

IV. VT Community Radio Update: Michele Stinson, representing the radio committee, reported that there have been some committee meetings on organizational stuff, but the larger group hasn’t met yet in 2025. Carmine had to step down from leadership and Michelle is now chair of the committee. Carmine helped with the antenna agreement with Okemo, and now the permit application submitted to the FCC needs to be amended to reflect the new location, which requires a new engineering study. The frequency configuration also needs to be changed so as not to compete with the Keene, NH, station. Funding will come from $20K granted by the town of Ludlow.

Michelle said the committee has purchased the online domains WLUD.org, okemovalleyradio.org, and blackriverradio.org, at a cost of $36. The State of VT Community Radio Network meets online once a month to share resources. Patrick mentioned that a summit organized by the VT Association of Broadcasters is being held on the Capitol Plaza in Montpelier on Wed., Feb. 12, to discuss legislative advocacy and pooling resources between radio and TV under the umbrella of community media.

Bob, as Treasurer, thanked Michelle for coming and reiterated that there are fundamental requirements he needs to see from the radio committee, including:

- A startup and ongoing budget, including costs and revenue sources.
- A written timeline of when steps will be achieved, budget, and infrastructure.
- An organizational chart.
- How 24/7 programming will be addressed.

Lisa reminded Michelle that the Board has approved *exploring* low-power radio, but hasn't officially voted to give the station the go-ahead yet. Michelle asked if Bob could help, and he said he could provide some structure. She said she had said in June that the station committee would try to have a three-year operating budget; Bob said it was too general.

Patrick found the timeline in notes from September, but said they haven't been taken up by the OVTV Board. Patrick said scheduling and volunteers aren't an issue; the question is how it bands together with the TV station. Patrick went through the timeline from a document entitled "Black River Radio Notes for OVTV Board," and noted that #1 hasn't been accomplished. Patrick said that is difficult because we don't yet know which will be the location, and the budget will depend on location costs. Michelle said they would prefer to locate it at OVTV.

Bob said he needs a solid budget to know the costs, because if there are large expenses and no revenues, those expenses will come back to OVTV. He needs to be assured that the radio station has the risk under control. He also asked to be kept aware of meetings being held so that he can attend.

Michelle said two people planned to visit WOOL FM in Bellows Falls, a model for us that is now a commercial station.

Claire asked if the building committee could support the process by committing to having a space here. Newt and Wendell thought this had been discussed; however, it has not been approved. Wendell said the mistake we made collectively is to put the operating budget plan ahead of the serious board discussion. If a 3-year budget is necessary to move forward for this, we need to make this a number one priority.

Patrick said other operating costs will be nominal compared to space. He expects the budget to be less than $10k a year if the station is volunteer-run. We know we have support from the town because of emergency alerts and emergency preparedness – a big funding opportunity is grants for radio stations that will commit to running PSAs related to emergency preparedness.

Michelle provided some history of how the TV station came to be, to show the parallels. Local folks sat down and mustered through fundraising, underwriting, budget, and structure. “Sometimes you have to take a little bit of a risk,” she said, pointing out that there are 50 people on the volunteer involvement list, and syndicated programs available.

Bob clarified that he is not opposed to the idea, but is trying to get structure into the process to get it closer to the point of getting on the air. He would like to see things formalized instead of making assumptions.

Wendell asked if these things could be pulled together before the Feb. meeting. All agreed that sounds like that’s the next step. Lisa asked for the radio station volunteer leadership to hold a meeting in the next three weeks with Patrick, Bob, and Sammy to come up with a three-year budget and structure so we feel comfortable that the OVTV staff will not be devoting time to it. Michelle asked for a commitment from the board soon of their support.

Patrick said FCC approval is also needed, which was a surprise to Bob. He pointed out that those kinds of strands need to be included in the timeline. Bob explained that he has a fiduciary responsibility to make sure the radio station doesn’t become a financial albatross on the TV station. If we have the info, we can vote in February on whether to commit to moving forward, he said.

Patrick said there are three location scenarios - space at OVTV, space at the school, or renting space on the open market. It was agreed to go with one scenario for now: that the station will be located at OVTV.

V. Director’s Report - The Director’s Report was sent to the board in advance.

Patrick discussed budget losses, such as a change in the formula for the state appropriation approved last year, which was $45,000 based on cable subscribers but was changed to year-round residents census data, shrinking our share to $17,000. They are retooling the formula for next year because they saw the disconnect. We are getting another $6,000 from a Comcast settlement fund balance. So now we have a $24,000 hole in our budget. Wendell asked how we take care of that. Patrick said we absorb a net loss, cut expenses, or raise more money. Claire asked if we need to cut employment. Patrick said we will have to pay Rebecca but we might have to cut people. Lisa cautioned that if we cut people, the station would suffer because we would have less product.

Bob said the money needs to come out of reserves, which relates to the building fund discussion and how much we need to keep in the reserve fund. We’re going to get to some number of what is left of what is available for upgrading the building. We need to decide how much long-term we need to keep.

Newt says we could tell people and run fundraising around that.

Stefan suggested we could ask the town for more to replicate what SAPA-TV is doing. Patrick said we just did this, actually, when communities were forming their 2025 budgets. We put in for an increase for Ludlow this year, 15%. Reading will be getting its first-ever appropriation, and there's an increase in Cavendish. If all these appropriations and new fees for service are fully funded, this will bring in $7K.

Stefan recommended sending press releases on underwriting and money needs to the Vermont Journal. Lisa, a former journalist, sugested we need more concrete subjects than just needing money.

VI. Community Engagement Update: underwriting, building fundraising

Lisa spoke on underwriting and unveiled a new one-sheet. She asked people to claim businesses, and Patrick shared the list with the Board.

Stefan said we do so much for others that provides value, publicizing events and meetings, and that's why they should underwrite us.

VI. Building Project: review cost estimate & funding sources, timeline

Wendell said $35K has to be spent by the end of this calendar year. Bob felt they needed recommendations to present. Stefan says let's pick one thing and finish it, such as doors and flooring. Patrick says there's more needed than that, including expansion or replacement of HVAC. Claire said the Building Committee must decide. Patrick wants a construction management firm instead of overseeing ourselves. Overall building project needs to be updated. Then have it drawn and prioritized and base it off that. Bob asked if we are just using $35K and do that, or are we pulling more out. Claire said that's what the committee should decide. Patrick said we need a financing plan for $92K we currently have. Bob and Wendell will discuss this from the financial side. Patrick said we did budget 80K.

VII. Financial Report: Budget vs Actuals -

INCOME

- $240,888 annual operating income, currently at $115,090 (48%).
- Underwriting - we expect to hit targets this year.
- We are less than half in membership.
- Production services we will be over this year because of the after-school program
- We should exceed interest income.

EXPENSES

- Salaries are on target.
- Insurance woes have been rectified - directors and officers reinstated.
- Workers comp reinstated.
- We had to buy more office supplies than anticipated.
- OVTV is 54% of the way through expenses, income is under.
- Net operating deficit currently is $16,000.
- There’s not much activity on the capital side.
- There’s been no movement on the website, so no payment yet. ($5,000 budgeted; can be delayed to next year)

IX. Personnel Policies:

Discussion on draft revisions to existing policies - tabled till next time.

Patrick said Rebecca is going on maternity leave in June. When she comes back it will not be full-time. There are opportunities to restructure staffing, revamping her job description, and bringing in someone else to help run the shop and be the main point of contact. This will happen in late spring.

X. Operating Policies & Procedures: Tabled.

XI. Other Business - None.

XII. Next Meeting Date. The next Board meeting was set for Feb. 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 7:19 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt
Secretary