State of the Station
July 2025

A summary of the high points & main events from the past year, our Fiscal Year 2025 (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025), along with insights on the current state of affairs and forecasts for the future.

For years, we have been proclaiming to be more than "just" a community television station, (although it stands to note that being "just" a community TV station is a big enough thing on its own). And while our mission has long been ingrained in training & education, our core services have revolved around video and being a TV station. So there has been a little bit of a disconnect between what we've proclaimed to be and how we've been perceived. That is all changing, and there's now no disputing that we are more than "just TV". We can now accurately claim that we are truly a multimedia organization; that's because Okemo Valley TV received a permit to build a low power FM community radio station! With WLUD on the horizon, the incentive was there to embrace audio programming, starting off with podcasting. As a medium, podcasting has been around for 20 years, but this past year, we've only begun experimenting with it, as we ramp up for the launch of the radio station. With the birth of WLUD, we foresee a lot of new energy and engagement. We are officially diversifying as we expand our media services and what we offer to become a multimedia resource for the community.

Okemo Valley TV is at an inflection point. There is much on the horizon, and big changes are afoot. It is important that we be strategic about every decision that is made so that we can put the organization in the best position possible to leverage new opportunities, while also addressing some very real challenges that lay ahead. The Board of Directors has been slowly but steadily plotting away at strategic planning, and is expected to adopt a new plan in the coming year that will likely include a new name for the umbrella organization that serves both Okemo Valley TV and WLUD.

We continue to operate two television channels, which are on local cable TV (Comcast & VTel), and also streaming online 24/7. The channel streams can be accessed through the website and - for the last two years - on our streaming app. In 2023, we began contracting with Lightcast, to develop and host our own customized app, which is available as a free download on "OTT" (Over the Top) platforms Apple TV, Fire TV, & Roku, as well as mobile platforms iOS and Google Play / Android. In addition to the live channels, local programming is available to watch on demand via the app. While the app comes at a cost (approximately $6,000 per year), it adds value to the programming by bringing it to wider audiences and on multiple platforms. In order to have relevance, the programming needs to be readily available and easy to find across multiple platforms, and evidence has shown that there has been a steady (albeit slow) increase in engagement and viewership through the app. In particular, the viewing of our live TV channels on the streaming app has increased dramatically; in the last year, there have been 3,785 views of the live streams. This increase in engagement with the app is attributed to two key features: 1) awareness of the live streaming of TV channels has been catching on and 2) we experimented with making some programming available as audio-only podcasts (the Okemo Valley TV Podcasts app is available on Apple Podcasts).

The other important online source for video programming is the YouTube channel, which has been playing an increasingly significant role in the distribution & viewership of programming; anecdotally, it seems to be the primary source to which many now turn to access Okemo Valley TV programming - more so than TV, or the website - and the data support that. While the You Tube channel was first launched more than 15 years ago, 85% of the 1,225 subscribers have been added in the last 5 years; nearly a quarter of them (311) were added just in the past year alone. During this same period (July 1, 2024 through today), the channel has grown to the point of very soon being eligible to be monetized, meaning that a small amount of revenue can be earned from You Tube. We are, at the core, a non commercial media entity. Our cable TV channels are specifically restricted from having commercial content, and the radio station will be even more restrictive. There are opportunities with the online platforms to generate revenue, which are less restrictive. How and to what extent these opportunities are leveraged should be considered as we map out the future, because the fact of the matter is that we do need to increase funding. However, it needs to be strategic and should be in the spirit of our core mission.

The take home to this is that online delivery - be it the website, the streaming app, or the You Tube channel - is where a certain amount of emphasis needs to be. However, there is a disconnect with funding; cable TV, despite its decreased emphasis, disproportionately accounts for more than ¾ of our funding. More on that below (see **FUNDING**).

Since our beginning, one of the key services that we have provided is the “gavel-to-gavel” coverage of local government meetings (these have historically included Selectboards, Planning Commissions & Zoning Boards, as well as school boards. Over the past few years, largely due to the proliferation of the hybrid meeting model, and the subsequent updates to Vermont’s Open Meeting Law, we are now covering more meetings than ever. However, the way in which these meetings are “covered” has changed. In some cases, thanks to COVID-era ARPA funding, a few of the Towns that we serve opted to purchase and install their own AV systems (Ludlow, Plymouth, & Mount Holly). At least one other (Cavendish) is planning to do so in the near future. Having these AV systems in place enables us to be more efficient with our time & resources, and also allows for opportunities to expand our services, such as doing more live broadcasting and streaming, providing needed technical support to Town government bodies, who are needing to comply with the newly-updated Open Meeting Law requirements. This has also led to training opportunities with municipal staff & officials, with the systems that are now in place. That is, we have been spending some time training them to operate the equipment so that they can record meetings that may not necessarily be for public consumption, and at which we may not be able to send someone.

At the same time this transition has taken place on the municipal level, the way in which local school board meetings take place - including how they get recorded - has changed. Instead of sending our staff out with equipment to do the work, as was the case for many years, the meetings are now all conducted through video conferencing-based systems that are in place in each school. We now simply receive the recordings and then do some basic post-production before sharing on our platforms. This is a lot less work and impact on our resources than doing the production ourselves, so there is certainly value in that from which we benefit. However, it does come at a cost; the end product that we receive and then put out there to the world is lower quality (especially the audio). My hope is that we can work through it with the Supervisory Union technology staff to make some improvements.

Another of our key services is providing our facility, equipment, and training to those wishing to produce their own programming. There are a number of dedicated community producers and volunteers who take advantage of this, but perhaps not as many as we'd like. One of the common pieces of feedback that we receive is that people aren't aware of these opportunities that we provide. Even though we've been around all this time, and our messaging has always included this fact, a lot of people are still unaware. This is an area for improvement. Our Board of Directors has made this a priority- that is, to make sure everyone in the community knows about us and what we provide. This past year, our Community Engagement Committee looked at several different ways of achieving this. Board members attended many of the Chamber of Commerce's monthly mixers, we have a new partnership with Ludlow Farmers' Market, we hosted an open house prior to the Annual Meeting, and in August we will be holding our first-ever "donor appreciation" event. These are all activities that can help raise awareness and foster increased engagement. There are some good bones on which we can build.

Still, there is a small but dedicated group of those who are already aware of us and what we do, and who take advantage of it.. The most frequent users who use the facility and/or borrow equipment at a high rate.

In addition to the free & low cost services that we provide to community members (for the creation of programming), there has been an interest among a small handful of people in renting the space for special interest & commercial purposes. There seems to be a need (albeit a small one) that we could fill by implementing a space / facility rental policy; in turn, this could be a small source of revenue.

BUDGET & FUNDING

In FY2025, our total funding was $228,406, with $201,580 of that earmarked for operating, and the remaining $26,826 for capital (equipment + facilities). For expenses, on the operating side, we had a total of $237,290 in operating expenses, and $12,486 in capital expenses, totaling $249,776. This represented a net deficit of $22,090, which can be attributed mainly to receiving less than anticipated from a State grant (more on that below).

The largest source of funding for us, by far, comes in the form of “PEG” (Public, Educational, & Government) Access fees, collected by the cable provider. These funds are paid to us as a designated PEG Access entity, as per State regulations. That’s because cable TV is regulated as a utility; in essence, these regulations - established 1980s telecommunications policy - are rooted in the idea that cable companies should provide compensation, in the form of serving the public interest through the designation of PEG Access channels and the funding to support them. In FY2025, of the $228,406 in total funding that we received, $177,710 of that came from cable / PEG Fees (or approximately 78%). Therein lies a dilemma and a challenge we have been facing as we strive for long-term sustainability; as cable subscribers “cut the cord” and move away from traditional cable TV, that funding has declined, more sharply so in the past year. In FY2025, we saw an approximate 10% drop in PEG Fee revenue in FY2025.

Since it has been long understood that our main source of funding (cable TV-related revenue) is in jeopardy, our statewide membership & advocacy organization (Vermont Access Network, or “VAN”), has been hard at work to find solutions to the problem. VAN has been working with a small VT-based consulting & lobbying firm for non profits, Action Circles, on developing & implementing a plan, focused on legislative advocacy. This has resulted in successfully securing a State appropriation, which is aimed at helping to offset the losses in cable revenue that we and our 24 colleagues across Vermont have been experiencing. The funds are paid out from the

State to VAN, which then allocates the payments to each individual station. Due to a change that VAN made in the formula, in an attempt to make the payments as equitable as possible, this past year, we grossly over-projected the amount in our budget. We based the budget on a level-funded amount for Okemo Valley TV of $45K, but at the time our budget was being adopted, the numbers from VAN were not ready. After the changes to the funding formula were made, we ended up receiving $16K, which represented a $29K gap in our operating budget, and which is reflected in our year-end net loss. While VAN's adjustments in the funding formula did make the distribution more equitable for some, it negatively impacted few, including Okemo Valley TV. Going forward, VAN has taken this into consideration and has made new adjustments to the formula in order to make improvements and resolve the inequity issue that we experienced this past year. As such, our portion of the FY2026 will be approximately $35K.

While the State funding is a relatively new addition to our annual budget, we have been fortunate to receive support from the local municipalities for many years. This has come in the form of annual appropriations, which are voted on by the people on Town Meeting Day. In total, this past year, we received a total of $5,650 in municipal appropriations from Ludlow, Plymouth, Cavendish, Mount Holly, and Andover. We are pleased to learn that we will be receiving an appropriation from the Town of Reading for the first time in FY2026. That means that we will be receiving support from all of the six Towns that we are designated to serve, and for whom we provide coverage of government meetings, (among other services). In addition to the Town appropriations, we have begun receiving additional support, directly related to the increased amount of services we provide for municipal meetings, in light of the now-ubiquitous hybrid format of meetings and newly-updated requirements of Vermont's Open Meeting Law. Municipal government bodies are now reliant on our coverage and the technical support that we provide. As such, beginning in FY2025, we have started receiving a contribution from the Town of Reading, resembling a fee-for-service, and in FY2026, we will be receiving a similar contribution from Mount Holly.

Funding diversity is critical to support operations, and especially now, within the context of declining cable revenue. Fortunately, we have support from the Towns, and now the State, but it is vital to have other forms of dependable revenue. Our two other forms of annual support come in the form of Memberships (from individuals) and Underwriting (from businesses). In FY2025, we received $2,699 in membership support, which actually fell short of the target of $5,000. The Board has identified areas for improvement, namely in following up during and after the annual Summer membership drive, and also using the launch of community radio (WLUD) to gain new members. This past year, we received $3,500 in Underwriting support from local businesses.

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Thank you to The Killarney, Vermont Properties / William Raevis Real Estate, Red Vault Productions, VT Ski House, & FOLA for being underwriters, and to VTel for the in-kind support, with the 1Gbps fiber optic internet connection, which makes all of the 24/7 audio & video streaming that we do possible. Still, revenue from underwriting fell short of the goal of $6,000; this is also an area for improvement, and from which WLUD community radio may be able to help.

FACILITY / BUILDING PROJECT

In addition to the normal operations, this past year, we have made some strides towards completing the next phase of renovations in our building. We moved into the facility in the Ludlow Community Center complex (the former Armory “tank barn”) in 2013. In the 12 years since, we have renovated in stages, as funds have allowed. We are now at a point where we need to build out space for the radio station, WLUD, make improvements to energy efficiency & HVAC, and enclose some additional spaces, including the editing suites. To do this requires fundraising, and to raise those needed funds, we have been focused on foundation support. In the past year, we have received grants from Ludlow Rotary Club, The Marro Trust, and The Windham Foundation, totaling $10,000. We have an additional $24,000 committed from the Vermont Arts Council, in the form of a Cultural Facilities Grant. We had projected to have this work completed during the past fiscal year, but it took longer than expected to get the proverbial ducks in a row; we needed to have enough of the funding in place, a consensus and approval from the Board, and contractors lined up. As of June 2025, we now have a construction management firm, VIS Construction Consultants, on retainer to manage the design and build-out for the scope of work.

PROGRAMMING

In FY2025, we had 966 new shows that were televised on Okemo Valley tV’s channels, the vast majority of which are also featured as video-on-demand on our website and You Tube Channels. Of these, 715 were “local” shows, meaning they were produced and/or generated in the local community and/or by members of the community. These numbers are consistent with previous years. We are thankful to everyone who contributed programming, the majority of which came in the form of one or a small handful of programs. However, there were some who provided a large quantity of programming. The most prolific presenters and producers were: *Sammy Blanchette (“The Tasty Twist”), Phill Gatenby (“Vermont’s 100 Covered Bridges”), Will Simoneau / Tec Gym Sports (coverage of various youth sports), Dave Pettit & Dave VanGuilder (“The Average Daves Movie & TV Talk”), United Church of Ludlow, Calvary Church of Proctorsville, St. James*

Methodist Church, & Claire McKey Berkman (Yoh Theatre Vlog)

In June, coinciding with our Annual Meeting, we announced the recipients of our community producer awards. They are:

- Producer(s) of the Year: Dave Pettit & Dave VanGuilder ("The Average Daves")
- Outstanding Achievement: Phill Gatenby
- Community Impact: Sammy Blanchette
- Youth Programming: Cavendish After School

We also created a new award this year, "Premiere of the Year", recognizing the Mount Holly Parent Teacher Group for a remarkable effort in putting together a fun & creative promotional video for an event they held in April.

"Gavel-to-gavel" coverage of government meetings is a core service that we provide, and account for a substantial portion of our resources. In all, Okemo Valley TV staff provided coverage for 270 local government meetings (municipal & school board), most of which were hybrid meetings.

In addition to government meetings, we allocate some staffing resources to provide coverage of some community events, special presentations, and other local programming. We try to "spread the wealth" around to various community organizations. On average, this accounted for about 2 productions per month over the past year. We provided coverage for events held by Fletcher Memorial Library, Reading Recreation Committee, the Future is Reading, Ludlow Rotary Club, Mount Holly Community Association, Cavendish Community & Conservation Association, Okemo Valley Regional Chamber of Commerce, Create Together at Fletcher Farm, Ludlow Fire Department, Lake Wise, Friends of Ludlow Auditorium, & Ludlow Farmers' Market.

Sammy Blanchette's new series "The Tasty Twist" launched in July 2024, and was billed as a TV show & podcast to showcase local musicians. Over the course of 6 months, with our support, Sammy produced 40 episodes, bringing a lot of new faces into the studio with him - musicians and other various community members. Sammy's show was also our first official foray into the world of podcasting. Historically, first & foremost, we have been a TV station and a living in the visual media. With the upcoming launch of WLUD community radio, podcasting is a nice "baby step" into audio-centric media. We only experimented with delivering "The Tasty Twist" as an audio-only podcast (in addition to being a TV show / video series), available on Apple Podcasts. While many episodes of the video series saw a high level of engagement (mostly on You Tube); out of the 30 episodes, 18 of them have had more than 100 views on You Tube, with the top episode getting 555 views. For comparison sake, that same episode as an audio-only podcast has 9,485 downloads.

WLUD COMMUNITY RADIO

We received the permit from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the Spring of 2024. Part of the requirements is to be “on the air” within three years. The plan is to have the station - WLUD - streaming online by the end of 2025, and broadcasting at 93.3 FM by the end of 2026. We have a committee working on the roll out of this plan, which includes at-large community members as well as a few Okemo Valley TV Board members. Over the past year it has been chaired by Michelle Stinson, a former Okemo Valley TV staffer, board member, and longtime advocate for bringing a radio station to Ludlow. The radio committee has benefited from the dedicated volunteer support of Carmine Iannace, who is an IT engineer with experience in radio broadcasting & engineering. Matt Sydorowich (owner of SydsCompufix in Ludlow) is a committee member, along with Claudine Langille (from Gypsy Reel), Jim Alic, and Sherry Scales. The Board members represented on the committee were our Treasurer, Bob Greenawalt, Sammy Blanchette, and Newt Rose.

The radio project has a lot of excitement around it, which has led to it receiving instrumental support, to help it get up and running. The Town of Ludlow has provided $20,000 from its ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds, in support of WLUD providing emergency alerts and information. Similar to Okemo Valley TV benefitting from being a part ofVermont Access Network (VAN), the statewide membership & advocacy organization, WLUD is now part of a network of other community radio stations in the State who are provided organizational and advocacy support from the Vermont Association of Broadcasters (VAB). And similar to VAN’s legislative advocacy work to raise funds for community TV, through the advocacy of VAB, for the first time ever, this year,, community radio stations are eligible to receive a State grant, up to $10,000; the funds are earmarked for capital expenses associated with supporting emergency response communications. This has been built into our FY2026 budget, and ties in well with the support that WLUD is already receiving from the Town of Ludlow.

In addition, WLUD is receiving in-kind support from Okemo Mountain Resort, which is providing space for the radio tower, antenna, & transmitter, and from Ludlow Electric, which has agreed to install a pole and conduit for the antenna and connection to the transmitter. Having this support really does give the station a “leg up” and will go a long way towards meeting the goal of being on the air by the end of next year.

Still, a lot of work lies ahead. At least to start, WLUD will be an all-volunteer radio station; we need programmers, DJs, and others with the interest to get involved.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

In August 2024, we worked with Red Vault Productions to host an outdoor screening of their film “The Forgotten” - about the aftermath of the July 2023 flood and the impact it had on the filmmakers & their neighbors in Proctorsville - along with Claire McKey Berkman’s Film “Therapy Won’t Kill You”. It was a great event, with more than 50 people in attendance, raising money for the flood relief fund for victims of the more recent (July 2024) flooding in Northern Vermont. This is the type of event we as an organization should be doing, both in terms of outdoor screenings in the warmer months, as well as at the Ludlow Town Hall, in partnership with FOLA (Friends of Ludlow Auditorium). There is room for opportunity, and it is nice to be able to be involved with events that have a direct connection to the services that we provide. It raises awareness, which leads to increased engagement.

As mentioned above, we have a new collaboration with Ludlow Farmers’ Market; this provides the opportunity for engagement with both Okemo Valley TV and WLUD. Another great collaboration has been with the Cavendish After School Program. Throughout the school year, we spent most Thursdays after school with the kids - at CTES and in the library - helping them to take their ideas and put them onto the screen. The end results were adaptations of a couple of different folk tales, culminating with the production of their *award-winning* rendition of “Chicken Little”. What made it possible for us to commit the staffing over the extended period of a whole school year was that we received some funding for it from Two Rivers Supervisory Union. We have been in discussions about continuing with this, and doing additional schools with the SU, but the feasibility of ongoing funding is unknown at this point, since after school programming is expected to be impacted by federal funding cuts.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

When Noah Schmidt stepped down from the Board last June, after spending the previous four years as President, it left a hole to fill. Wendell Perkins was then elected as President in July, after being Treasurer. Bob Greenawalt was then elected Treasurer, Claire McKey Berkman Vice President, and Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt re-elected as Secretary. The Board had a lot of important considerations this past year, which led to a vote on the inclusion of WLUD and creating a space for it within the Okemo Valley TV facility, and on the proposal to move forward with the building project. In May 2025, it held a retreat, along with staff, to discuss a few of the key topics, including

the potential restructuring and rebranding of the organization, reboot of the strategic planning work, and fundraisers.
In June, the 3-year terms of Bob Greenawalt, Lisa Hamm-Greenawalt ended. We thank them for their involvement and contributions as Board members. New board members John Hanlon and Trevor Barlow were elected at the Annual Meeting on June 18th; welcome John & Trevor! And Wendell Perkins was re-elected to another 3-year term.

STAFFING
This past year, staffing levels were maintained at 2.8 FTE (full time equivalent); this were: Patrick Cody (Executive Director), Rebekah Fontaine (Station Manager), Elia Lloyd (Program Scheduler), and Field Producer / Production Associates Sarah Devereux, Peter van Gorder, and - later - Willem Bargfrede, along with fill-in production associates Sarah Bennett & Gavin Greenawalt.

Peter van Gorder reduced his role with us when he began teaching at Expeditionary School at Black River, giving us the opportunity to bring Sarah Devereux up to a half-time position. In April, she left for a full-time position at Dartmouth College. We then hired Willem, who has filled the half time production position.

In June, Rebekah, our reliable and friendly Station Manager, went on maternity leave, representing a big transition for us; when she returns to work, later this Summer, she will be part-time and mostly working from home. As such, Willem has been picking up some of that extra work, along with Gavin. Congratulations goes out to Rebekah and her family, including baby Caleb.

Gavin, who has filled in part-time on occasion over the past few years as a part-time staff member, graduated from Champlain College in May; congratulations, Gavin!

As we look forward to the future, and the evolution of our organization and the role it plays in the community, we know that staffing and Board leadership are key ingredients. Having and maintaining the right ingredients now and well into the future must be a focal point in the strategic planning.

LOOKING AHEAD
Speaking of looking ahead, next year - 2026 - marks the organization’s 25th anniversary! LPCTV, as it was known, first started covering local events and televising on Adelphia channel 8 in the late Summer of 2021. Also in 2026, we expect that WLUD community radio will go on the air,

broadcasting locally at 93.3 FM. These are both big things and great opportunities for community engagement.

The other big thing coming down the pike for us is the new website. While we were planning for the launch to happen before the end of FY2025, it has been delayed slightly and is now instead being planned for the late Summer or early Fall of 2025.