

Vermont PBS
Community Council Meeting
June 20, 2016
Middlebury Interactive Languages – Middlebury, VT

Present: Bill Holiday (vice chair), Steve Alexander, Jane Birnn, Emerald Drake, Nora Jacobson, Cindy Waters, Cindy Weed, Offie Wortham

Absent: Jerry Aldredge (chair), Randall Balmer, Joyce McKeeman, Barbara Morrow, Lars Hasselblad Torres

Staff Present: Holly Groschner, Scott Campitelli, Rob Cunningham, Chuck Pizer, Andrea Rosencrantz

Guests: Bill Hart, Chris & Ellada Siliski, Lyle Holiday, Gov. James Douglas

Minutes:

Bill Holiday called the meeting to order at 1:15. Introductions were made.

A motion was made by Cindy Weed, seconded by Steve Alexander to approve the minutes of the March 11, 2016 meeting. None opposed, motion carried.

Council in the Community

Council members reviewed their involvement in community activities in their communities. Cindy Waters was involved in screenings of Last Will & Testament and 15 to Life. Both films lent to robust discussions. Cindy added that working with Vermont PBS provides a great partnership with opportunities for people in the community. When looking to promote a screening at the library, Cindy stated that she tries to target the best audience. For 15 to Life, she contacted the criminal justice program. She also develops relationships with local reporters in order to pitch stories and gain media coverage.

Nora Jacobson opened a connection for Vermont PBS to work with the Norwich Library. A PBS Kids Writers Contest storytime was held at the library as well as a screening of Ken Burns' Jackie Robinson. Nora stated that winners have been selected for the Youth Film Contest. Keith Swann and Eric Ford of Vermont PBS were judges. Winning films will be broadcast on Vermont PBS this fall.

Emerald Drake was involved with the Vermont PBS Kids Writers storytime at the St. Albans Library. She received positive feedback from parents attending.

Bill Hart stated that he was involved in a screening of the Black Panthers at Middlebury College. Students organized the event with 69 people attending the screening. He thought the program was eye-opening for the students and the content allowed for a robust discussion.

Vermont PBS Initiatives

Holly reviewed the new organization structure at the station. Scott Campitelli has been hired as VP of Content and Distribution. This includes studio production, local content, programming and web/online distribution. A Membership Experience department has been created. This focuses on engagement and communication with members. Underwriting, grants and Major are grouped in the Collaboration Department.

This will be a robust election season. There will be forum on healthcare on June 27th in Burlington, and on July 19th, a gubernatorial debate on climate change at the Paramount Theatre in Rutland. Debates and forums will continue into the fall.

Issues facing communities in Vermont

Council members discussed issues facing their communities. Lyle Holiday stated that in Windham County, Act 46 has become an issue in the community. Additionally, opioid addiction issues are prevalent in the community. Issues with the opioid crisis affect medical, law enforcement and schools.

Emerald Drake added that the St. Albans Community is also struggling with the opioid crisis. She reported community members coming together to clean up a local park.

Holly Groschner stated that a Frontline episode was devoted to the opioid crisis. Vermont PBS can be a conduit for information. Vermont PBS can provide education and forums for discussion. Vermont PBS can also create content that documents things that are working in communities.

Chris Siliski stated that in Rutland, conversations have been taking place around opiate issues. In the past three years, crime is down and the trust in the police department has increased.

Bill Hart asked about the role of Vermont PBS in dealing with issues in local communities. Holly explained that Vermont PBS can provide general education to a large audience. Vermont PBS can also initiate public forums to talk about certain issues facing multiple communities around the state.

Scott Campitelli noted the importance of the council in providing feedback to the station from their communities.

Chuck Pizer reviewed engagement activities since the last meeting. There have been 29 events, attended by 1943 people. Events were held in 10 counties. The partnership with Head Start and Catamount Arts continues to be strong. Chuck would like to expand this around the state. This summer, there will be screenings of Jackie Robinson. Spooky Saturday will be held in October.

Chuck Pizer presented plaques to the outgoing Council members: Offie Wortham, Jane Birnn, and Steve Alexander. They were thanked for their service to the Council.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:50.