

Vermont PBS
Community Council Meeting
March 11, 2016, 12:00PM
Vermont PBS Studio - Colchester, VT

Present: Jerry Aldredge (chair), Bill Holiday (vice chair), Randall Balmer, Jane Birnn, Emerald Drake, Nora Jacobsen, Joyce Mckeeman, Lars Hasselblad Torres (via skype), Cindy Waters, Cindy Weed, Offie Wortham

Absent: Steve Alexander, Barbara Morrow

Staff Present: Holly Groschner, Chuck Pizer, Bryan Holland, Neil Hilt, Joe Merone, Andrea Rosencrantz

Guests: Ryan Torres

Minutes:

Jerry Aldredge called the meeting to order at 12:35. He welcomed Emerald Drake and Cindy Waters to their first meeting as members of the Council. Introductions were made.

A motion was made by Randall Balmer, seconded by Bill Holiday to approve the minutes of the December 11th meeting with the correction of spelling of Bill Holiday's name. None opposed, motion carried. The minutes will be forwarded to the Vermont PBS Board of Directors and posted on the Vermont PBS website.

The Council members reviewed engagement activities they have participated in since the last meeting. Bill Holiday held a screening of Black Panthers at the Brattleboro High School. He was also involved with the Downton Abbey screening at the Latchis Theatre. When holding a screening at the high school, Bill noted that he sends out a press release to the local press inviting the public to come. He noted that the Latchis Theatre is open to having more events at the facility. Offie Wortham stated that he was a panelist at the Black Panther screening in Brattleboro and was upset that the screener of the program didn't depict the entire story of the Black Panthers. The entire program did depict the entire story, just not the screener that was shown. Jane Birnn felt that it is important to let the audience know when and how to watch the full programs. Jerry stated that the discussion after the Black Panthers screening in St. Johnsbury focused on the era, not just the Black Panthers. The Kids film series at Catamount Arts continues to be a hit with preschoolers. He has had requests to hold family screenings in the evening. Cindy Waters was involved in a Downton Abbey screening, A Self Made Man, and Debt of Honor at the Manchester Library. The Downton Abbey event involved great community volunteers. As far as the length of films, Cindy Waters felt that one hour was ideal. Discussion lacks if screening is over an hour. As far as publicity, notices were posted on the library's website and Facebook pages and targeted emails were sent. Joyce Mckeeman suggested partnering with the Vermont Humanities Council around the Vermont Reads Program. There was recently a perfect tie in on the Shackleton expedition. Holly has spoken with Peter Gilbert, head of the Vermont Humanities Council, and there has been some reluctance in sharing content. Joyce added that the students at the Thetford Academy put a panel together after a screening of A Self Made Man. Jerry thanked the Council members for their engagement on behalf of Vermont PBS in their communities.

Holly updated the Council on station news. Reorganization is in the works – and will be rolled out in April. New hires will support the future of Vermont PBS is local content, viewer experience, and member experience. The Governor recommended \$270,000 in appropriations for FY2017. The station is working hard to keep that money in the budget. The station has hired a lobbyist. This year, the objective is to be more strategic when reaching out to legislators. If one of the key legislators is in a Council member's district, Holly will reach out to the member with talking points, and a video link.

Holly stated a new initiative at the station is : Members are the Mission. This will focus on growing members and redefining how the organization classifies a member. A member is anyone with whom the station communicates. The goal is to create more members and engage those members in conversations.

Holly discussed the role of Vermont PBS in the political arena this year. PBS continues to keep up standards in the midst of mayhem. It remains an important conveyor of content distribution and discussion around difficult topics.

Joe Merone discussed Poets in their Craft, a 10 part series that debuted on March 24th. Poetry Out loud, a high school poetry competition will be webcast on 3/17/16. Jerry thanked Joe for his service to the organization.

Lars Hasselblad Torres gave the Council a presentation on his insights of Vermont PBS in relation to the new media landscape. There are an ever growing number of platforms to watch content. Live television viewing is decreasing, with more content being consumed elsewhere. Social media is also playing a greater role in content and driving people to that content. Lars reviewed Vermont PBS social platforms. He sees a lack of engagement with followers on Twitter. He felt that the content on YouTube needs to be curated more. In addition, vermontpbs.org does not drive people to the various social media sites. This is a lost opportunity for engagement. There needs to be an online strategy that compliments the content with deliberate engagement hooks. Holly thanked Lars for this presentation and invited him to the next Board meeting to discuss this again.

Chuck Pizer reviewed engagement events. The Downton Abbey screening events drew 623 people from around the state. There have been 35 engagement events in the past quarter reaching 202 kids, 1500 adults, in 17 towns. 8 New partnerships were created. The PBS Kids Writers contest deadline is March 18th. Screenings around Jackie Robinson will begin around the state with the program airing in the spring.

Holly asked the Council members to share with the station the topics that are important in their community. Jane Birnn stated she had brought a content idea about the destruction of the bike path in the Islands several years ago and nothing at the station was ever done on it. Holly reiterated that time and money are always a concern around local content creation.

Ryan Torres, a guest at this meeting, stated that it is interesting to hear what does on at the station beyond the television broadcast.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:45.