



Northeast Courier

Newsletter of the Alliance for Community Media – Northeast Region

www.acm-ne.org

Issue 41

Spring 2015, part A

Reports from the State Affiliates

VAN on the Move

From the January 2015 report

Burlington Stations Team Up on LPFM Radio

The FCC has awarded a construction permit for WBTV-LP 99.3 FM to a group comprised of three “BAMOs” (Burlington area Access Management Organizations): VCAM, RETN, and CCTV (Ch. 17 / Town Meeting TV). The group now has two years to get WBTV up and running.

WBTV-FM has a Wordpress site (<https://993wbvtv.wordpress.com/>) with details. VCAM and RETN, which already share some of their facilities on Flynn Avenue, have rented additional adjoining space and are fitting it up not only to house the radio station’s control room but also for meeting and workshop training spaces, an equipment checkout vault, and storage. The project’s startup capital cost of up to \$15K and annual operating expenses of up to \$10K, however, will be paid for not with PEG funds but with donations, underwriting, grants and other creative endeavors.

Depending on the final siting of the antenna, they expect the low-wattage signal to reach most of the City of Burlington and possibly beyond into the adjacent cities. The group states “We are positioning ourselves to be a listener-supported, volunteer-programmed radio station that crowd-sources content from our existing public access TV centers, as well as live and pre-produced radio shows that come from

(Continued on page 3)

News from New York State

From the 2014 ACMNY Annual Report

In 2014 ACMNY was pleased to award a full Grassroots Scholarship to the ACM-NE Region Conference and Trade Show in Nashua, New Hampshire to Jim Charzuk of Herkimer, NY. We awarded additional travel expenses to other NY residents who attended that conference and the National ACM Conference in Philadelphia in August. An additional ACM-NE State Scholarship was shared by ACMNY Board Member Zebulon Schmidt and Timothy Vause. All the scholarship recipients attended the regional Conference, Trade show and Video Festival. Several Video awards were claimed by New York producers from around the state.

Building the case for access media

In August 2014 ACM New York was represented by the Chair—Maryann Arrien—at a special meeting concerning state-level PEG legislation in the Northeast Region and Beyond. That meeting was hosted by Bob Kelly at NewTV in Newton MA, and had representatives from all over the Northeast, including New Jersey. ACM President Mike Wassenaar was also in attendance. We discussed the basic Massachusetts law template, and how it should be tweaked from state to state. Maryann

(Continued on page 6)

This issue is devoted to reports from the ACM state chapters that make up the Northeast Region: Vermont Access Network (VAN), Alliance for Community Media of New York (ACMNY), Community Television Association of Maine (CTAM), New Hampshire Coalition for Community Media (NHCCM), Connecticut Alliance for Community Media (CTacm), and MassAccess of Massachusetts. Coming soon will be news from national and Northeast boards.

Maine-ly Access

CTAM report March 2015

Greetings from the State of Maine!

The snow is slowly melting, the sun is shining. CTAM did not have a meeting in snowy January. The next meeting will be April 28th at WGLT TV7 in Greene, Maine.

Our archive project has not been very active this past year; what has been collected is on archive.org. The stations in Maine are still active in Maine, keeping residents informed of what is happening in their communities.

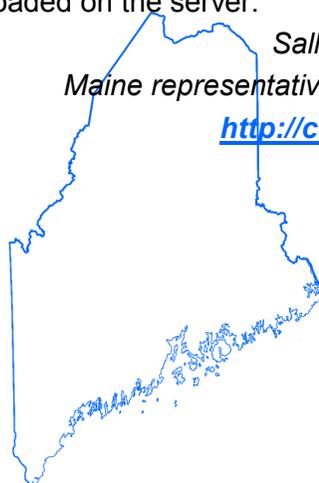
Brian Knoblock has taken the position of public policy person while Tony Vigue took a rest from that position. Steve Galvin has stepped down from the Board, as he is in charge of VSTV in Rockland, Maine. This is a new local station run by Village Soup. We will be replacing him at the April meeting.

WGLT TV7 got hacked! We got a call from Time Warner stating that Columbia

University received multiple emails (over 106,000) in one day from us. We are currently changing our ISP addresses. Our engineer, Mike Stephenak, is working very diligently on this. A report of this problem will be made to the stations in Maine so they can be on the lookout. Mike found that seven password sniffer programs had been downloaded on the server.

Sally Ann Hebert
Maine representative to ACM-NE

<http://ctamaine.org/>



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volunteer community programmers.” They vow not to compete either with Burlington’s existing LPFM and streamed music-oriented station 105.9 WOMM-LP (“The Radiator”), or the University of Vermont’s student-run 90.1 FM WRUV.

VTel Contracts

With the roll-out of its new fiber optic network underway, Springfield-based VTel (Vermont Telephone Co.) has received signed contracts from four access stations in their territory. The four stations now operating under PEG Access contracts with VTel are CATV in White River Jct., FACT in Bellows Falls, Woodstock Community TV, and Rutland Regional Community TV (aka “PEG TV”). Two other stations in VTel’s territory- LPCTV in Ludlow and SAPA in Springfield – remain in negotiations.

DPS Issues 10-year Telecommunications Plan

The Vermont Department of Public Service’s has issued its long-awaited Telecommunications Plan.

“The 158-page Plan includes a good description of what PEG Access is, and explains how it ‘contributes to democracy in the community’ as well as ‘media literacy,’” as VAN’s Greg Epler-Wood notes.

PEG concerns are underscored, including the decline of cable subscribers, the lack of HD PEG channels and need for parity with commercial stations. The report recommends that Vermont should consider the many ways PEG stations deliver content and the ways in which most consumers access their content. It also points to the need for adequate funding for PEG access centers, but does not see the solution as a tax on retail broadband Internet subscriptions.

Mike Wassenaar Visits Vermont

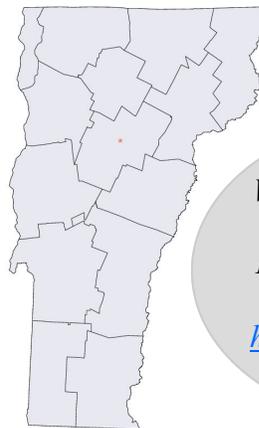
ACM President Mike Wassenaar visited Vermont recently to meet with representative from the Vermont Access Network and to attend and file comments at the Public Service Board / Charter Communications Certificate of Public Good hearings . He also visited several access stations in the region. In his recent newsletter, Mike commented

about the trip, noting the following:

“The only seeming drawback of community media life in Vermont? The eight below temperatures on the sites visits, I suppose. Still, there was a lot of heart-warming hospitality and great ideas for how the national ACM organization can work in partnership with the community access organizations in the state.

“My thanks to the Vermont Access Network Board of Directors and Greg Epler-Wood; MMC-TV in Richmond; RETN, VCAM and CCTV, Burlington; ORCA in Montpelier; Woodstock Community Television; CCTV in Barre; and CATV in White River Junction for their insights and hospitality.”

*Patrick Cody
Vermont
representative to
ACM-NE*



*VAN = Vermont Access
Network.*

*Read more about them:
on*

<http://vermontaccess.net>

ACM-NE will send someone to the national conference in Pasadena

In memory of Paul Berg, the former Executive Director of NewTV (Newington, MA) who passed away in February, the ACM-NE is offering a scholarship to the Alliance for Community Media conference in Pasadena, CA in August 2015. This event will feature a trade show, workshops and the Hometown awards. Are you an individual or organizational ACM member in need of travel assistance? Or are you active in your state chapter? This scholarship is meant to cover registration and the bulk of expected travel expenses.

Contact your state representative for an application. Deadline:

Wednesday, May 28.



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Connecting in Connecticut

Connecticut ACM (CTacm) report from March ♦ www.connecticutacm.org

Weather has been a major factor in keeping us from meeting face-to-face since last October in Nashua. The ups and downs of recovering and maintaining PEG funds here holds us together as a chapter as we discuss matters by email and a conference call. An ACM-NE conference in Hartford could give us some happy reasons to get together.

PEGPETIA: The capital grants fund was restored after its inclusion in the annual bonding bill in June 2014, a variety of efforts to include it in the agenda of the state Bond Commission, and its \$3.5 million restoration last January 2015. The program was open for applications in early February. The governor's released his proposed budget SB 946 which proposes to divert all PEGPETIA funds from the 2016 and 2017 fiscal year.

In just four weeks, 11 PEG applications and 23 educational applications totaling over \$4.2 million were submitted. The PEGEPTIA grant window is not closed until further notice.

Five of us testified before the Energy & Technology committee on a bill to maintain the funding in general (during which the new sweeps were discovered). There is a house bill that was introduced in February that is now the vehicle to restore the PEGPETIA fund. (HB 5555).

Section 1. (*Effective July 1, 2015*) The sum of four million two hundred thousand dollars is appropriated to the public, educational and governmental programming and education technology investment account, from the General Fund, for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016, for the purposes

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Wish ACM Northeast success in
all its endeavors

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The firm's principals represent many non-profit public access centers in cable license, regulatory, corporate, governance, tax exemption and related matters. Peter Epstein and Bill August look forward to working closely with and advocating for the public access community.

of section 16-331cc of the general statutes.

On March 9, the day of the public hearing for SB 946, the Public Utility Regulatory Authority closed the application process again. Two of us appeared before Finance, Revenue & Bonding to testify against the new sweeps.

Good news: There is an overlap of friendly legislators in both committees, and HB 5555 has progressed as a redrafted Committee Bill, restoring all anticipated funds going into the fund for 2015-16. We were asked and subsequently provided information on all the towns that have benefitted from the programs since it began in 2008 (124 of 169), which should help our legislators gather wider support.

This perhaps should be a cautionary tale to others seeking the same funding model. We are finding it difficult to maintain the energy to fight the same battles every year. While we had widespread support and engagement last year to restore PEGPETIA, the new proposed sweeps seemed to take the wind from everyone's sails and only two people testified at the public hearing.

Annual Community Access Support: The Public Utility Regulatory Agency issued a "proposed Final Decision" on the 2015 per subscriber funding for the 34 officially designated Community Access Providers. It is the basis for operating funds of the CAPs. Because the 2014 inflation rate is a negative number, per sub funding is reduced for the first time in decades (-0.38%). One of the PEG staff from a regional, cable-run center judged a \$600 loss as negligible, but the nonprofits—especially the 13 town-specific CAPs—will probably feel the loss. The deadline to submit comments on this proposal is April 20.

We are investigating the measures that were used to calculate the CPI adjustment as they may be different from those used previously. Over-the-Top: Several bills were submitted to ameliorate the loss of CAP funding as

subscribers cut the cord; all considered the possibility of extending per sub funding from subscribers of any service provided by MVPDs (internet and telephone as well as video). None of these bills has progressed this session; the possibility of inclusion by amendments from the floor to other bills is dim. But several CAPs have discussed different ways to go forward—argue before PURA to consider other factors besides inflation during the annual assessment, forge ahead with subscriber-based website programming. Non-CAP community access operators are less invested in the problem. Obviously, we watch what happens at federal level on this topic.

Also, it's important to note that in Connecticut, community media is funded as a fee that is a condition of the license and not from the public rights of way monies. Currently, the 5% gross receipts tax (what might be called the franchise fee) goes directly into the State of Connecticut general fund. PEGPETIA is funded by an additional 0.25% gross receipts tax on cables, telcos and satellite services..

Frontier Communications: After this company acquired its first U-Verse property from AT&T last fall, it was supposed to meet with PEGs to discuss our technical issues by January. This has not happened, nor have we pursued a meeting. However they were the only MVPD to submit testimony on HB 5555, and they did so in favor.

Congressional Outreach: Joanie McCauley of Nutmeg Television in Farmington coordinated visits with Rep. Elizabeth Esty's aide. Joanie and I found her team very responsive and learned she has a history of production and involvement public access television. We planned to connect with Rep. John Larson during the April break.

*Jennifer Evans
CTacm representative to ACM-NE*

*November 18-20, 2015
ACM Northeast Regional Conference
Hartford Marriott
Northeast Video Festival: Nov. 21*

(Continued from page 1)

brought up the three legislative initiatives that we want in NY State, namely a “2 and 3” bill patterned after the Massachusetts “5 and 1” bill, the creation of a NY version of Connecticut’s PEGPETIA grant program to fund startup channels and technical upgrades, and a mandate for minimum number of PEG channels in NY State municipalities, adjusted for population density.

During the ACM-NE conference in last fall we were able to get an HD video interview with ACM President Mike Wassenaar addressing the people of NY State. We showed the complete interview at ACMNY’s third face-to-face meeting on October 16, 2014 . Guests who were relatively uninitiated to PEG issues found it very engaging.

That October Board meeting was held at Open Stage Media in Schenectady, hosted by Zeb Schmidt and Timothy Vause. The date had originally been scheduled for a videotaping of our PEG Access Roundtable Discussion as well, but impending November elections made the presence of our guest state legislators virtually impossible. Some had not been re-elected, so a roundtable with videotaping was held on April 18. Invited guests included NY State Assemblyman Cahill and US Congressman Chris Gibson.

At the end of 2014 Zeb Schmidt was appointed as a board member for ACM Northeast. In 2015 both Zeb and Maryann will serve on that board to more fully represent the needs of New York State. The time has come for all of New York State to get what the rest of the Northeast Region has.

The power of speaking up

In July 2014 ACMNY submitted comments regarding the **proposed Comcast/Time Warner Cable merger to the NY State Public Service Commission**, citing that penetration of PEG channels was abysmal in the areas served by Time Warner Cable in upstate NY. Comments stated that the deficiency must not be allowed to continue if TWC merges with Comcast. We requested

that it be made a condition of any merger that PEG channels be provided to the vast “dark areas” of NY State, as evidenced by the **Community Media database mapping utility** created by Rob McCausland in Virginia.

ACMNY also submitted comments to the FCC on the same merger. In searching the filing database, we saw that the NY Public Service Commission had also filed comments that same day, and had footnoted our comments to the the PSC made days earlier. NYSPSC literally asked the FCC to use its “broader powers” to add protection for PEG community media. Also footnoted were comments from New York City Mayor Bill DiBlasio to NYSPSC on behalf of Manhattan Neighborhood Network, including a quote by the Mayor. The extensive PSC filing caused quite a bit of blowback to the Comcast/Time Warner Cable proposed merger, and according to a Huffington Post blog a few days later, New York State has become a key player in determining if the merger will go, and what conditions will be required if it goes through. [bloomberg.com 8/29/14].

We must conclude that ACMNY’s filings with the PSC and FCC were not totally in vain, and we must never underestimate the power of filing comments in related PEG issues. Since we are now a bit more on the radar, we hope our concerns will be addressed in an expected federal **rewrite of the Telecom Act**. Among the 180+ letters of comment from community media centers to the House Energy and Commerce Committee are several from NY state.

Trouble at the grassroots

The Albany area still has **ChannelAlbany**, but Joe Cunniff reported in October that the Albany Cable Access Advisory Board, which he chaired, has been disbanded by the City of Albany. It appears that further funding for basic PEG operations is still in a holding pattern in Albany. Since there is no longer an Advisory Board to hear a presentation from ACMNY, ChannelAlbany’s only recourse is to a meeting with Albany’s mayor to explain privately the necessity of expanded

PEG operations. ChannelAlbany is a shared government and public access channel, with most of the public access content being supplied by Open Stage Media in Schenectady. This arrangement was successful in meeting the area's minimum original programming requirement to qualify for their Phase 2 funding agreement with Time Warner Cable. Still, out of their \$1.4 million of cable franchise fees, the City of Albany only spends \$20,000 per year for a contractor to produce a few shows for ChannelAlbany. No one has been hired to videotape the government meetings. There is a single camera on the back wall of the meeting room that takes a static wide shot of the meetings.

Dave Renner reported that **Penfield TV** lost one of their three employees due to budget cuts and reduced franchise fees. At the ACM National Conference in Philadelphia, Sue Buske reported that the **City of Syracuse** has not moved forward with Time Warner Cable to receive PEG channels—very disappointing for such a big city. The **Town of Esopus** still has the \$10,000 grant for new playback equipment, courtesy of Assemblyman Kevin Cahill, but not of penny of it has been spent on the **Esopus Community TV Channel** by their Town Supervisor. That channel continues to operate with a Power Point scroll, only covers one meeting per month, and plays programs submitted by only one individual. We are hungry for some good news in NY State, but it hasn't yet reached our ears.

Supporting the national changes

Community media channels in NY State are beginning to lose financial support, with the exception of the organizations in the five boroughs of NYC, which are doing very well. Some stress is felt even there due to the change in ACM national dues structure. Four of the five boroughs' centers are carrying the increase of their dues (typically from \$500 to \$,5000/year). Despite fears that medium-sized centers in the state might drop their membership, we haven't heard such attrition yet. We have heard of many individual ACM members who have dropped their

membership when it went from \$35 to \$200/year.

Fortunately, in the new national dues structure, board members of Affiliates need not carry membership; only the Chairperson needs to be an ACM member. Hopefully we can maintain ACMNY and the other NY State community media centers. The real challenge is increasing individual ACM members who work at government or educational channels in our state. The Professional rate of \$200/year is very difficult for most of them; the Supporting Member rate of \$50/year would be more manageable.

Happily, the national Alliance for Community Media decided not to require dues for state chapters (affiliates) if they charge no dues or if their annual income is less than \$25,000. ACMNY charges no dues. We have learned that to be an affiliate, it is not necessary for ACMNY to incorporate as a 501c3 or 501c6. Since our income is way under the \$5,000/yr limit, it is not even required for us to become a nonprofit organization in our state.

In conclusion, besides staying engaged with ACM President Mike Wassenaar's national public policy initiatives, we must continue to make an effort to get legislation drafted in NY State. We will start by making and distributing the Roundtable Discussion video in April to raise consciousness amongst the residents and the legislators in New York State. They must realize that we are way behind in the community media universe and must catch up so that we may enjoy enhanced community participation, economic development, government information and cultural enrichment that is engendered by vibrant PEG channels.

The April meeting was our face-to-face meeting for 2015. We will hold a conference call for the October 2015 meeting since it is so close to the next ACM-NE conference. Stay in touch by checking the **ACMNY website** or contacting someone on the board.

*This annual report from ACMNY was written by the tireless **Maryann Arrien**, New York representative ACM-NE.*
www.acmny.org

NEWS FROM MASSACHUSETTS

Adapted from the MassAccess reports

MassAccess held its Annual Meeting at Malden Access Television in January. Congresswoman Katherine Clark was awarded the 2014 Legislator of the Year Award. She told the board that we “have a friend in Congress.” The following retiring MassAccess board members were also awarded Appreciation of Service to MassAccess:

- Terry Duenas, Cape Cod Media Center: on Board since 1998
- Keith Thibault, Fall River Community Television: on Board since 1997
- Bob Kelly, NewTV, Chair 2009–2014

MassAccess has new Board officers:

- President Bill Nay (Shrewsbury)
- Vice President Melinda Garfield (Newton),
- Secretary Erich Archer (Cape Ann TV).
- Melinda Garfield also serves as interim Treasurer.

We also welcomed three new Board members: Eric Dresser (Hingham), David Gauthier (Winchester), and Stephen Kessinger (Newton).

Returning Board members are Jonathan Barbato (Arlington), Jeff Hansell (Belmont), and Scott MacPherson (Greenfield).

We are also in the process of revamping our website to make it more user-friendly and simple. We are reaching out to members using more video material on social media sites. Additionally, MassAccess is crafting a new Mission Statement to communicate our role to centers across the state. Our proposed language is as followed:

Massachusetts Community Media, Inc. (MassAccess) is a non-profit organization serving and supporting local community media centers across Massachusetts. MassAccess provides assistance, guidance and support to community media organizations across the state and monitors legislation at the state level, lobbying for the viable future of community media when necessary. Through education workshops, moderated discussions and community program file sharing, MassAccess acts as the hub from which the wheel of community media in Massachusetts spins. Through these efforts, MassAccess aspires to create a community of media professionals and users based on mutual respect and support.

Public Policy is ongoing. The MassAccess Board submitted a letter to The Honorable Fred Upton regarding the Regulation of the Market for Video Content and Distribution. I will quote the closing paragraph for you here.

The question should not be “Are the needs for PEG Channels still warranted?” but rather, “How can we ensure that PEG channels and public access to all media platforms be grown and supported?”

Bob Kelly has drafted *An Act to Support Community Access Television*, which was disseminated at the Annual Meeting. It asks



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Lots of great photos from the 2014 Northeast Conference & Video Festival can be found on JP Fortier's online albums www.creativepixphotos.smugmug.com/Events Materials from the workshops are on our website: www.acm-ne.org, under News, Search for Resources.



that the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court assembled add on to Chapter 166A and 207CMR of the DPC General Laws. The proposed amended sections 23 and 24 would be a foot in the door to discuss HD channels, channel guides, preventing channel slamming, and updating hubs and head ends. By March, The House finally moved several bills, including our omnibus bill, filed by Rep. Balsler. It was sent to the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy whose Senate chair is Sen. Downing (Pittsfield) and House chair is Rep. Golden (Lowell). The next step is to figure out when a hearing might be scheduled and write letters of support.

MassAccess Annual Spring Conference: The MassAccess Spring Conference was held on Monday, April 27th at the National Basketball Hall of Fame in Springfield, Massachusetts. In addition to vendor booths, there were three workshop tracks to choose from: *Production*, *Successful Strategies*, and *Thinking Outside of the Office*.

Our keynote speaker was Martha Fuentes-Bautista, Ph.D. She is an Assistant Research Professor and Director of Engaged Research and Learning in the Department of Communication, and the Center for Public Policy at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her research focuses on digital media and social inequalities, and the role of media activist networks, community media, and media reform movements in shaping media democracy and social inclusion in the U.S. and Latin America. Her current research explores the impacts of digital community media on local governance and citizen participation.

Jonathan Barbato
MassAccess representative to the
ACM-NE board
www.massaccess.org/



News from New Hampshire

New Hampshire Coalition for Community Media

At the January 20 meeting, the following Board members were elected for 3-year terms: Bill Jennings (Bedford), Dick Gagnon (Access Nashua), Colby Clark (Somersworth). Jason Cote (Manchester) was elected to a one-year term as alternate. Peter Pijoan was elected as NHCCM representative to ACM-NE board.

At a brief meeting, the new board elected officers: President Peter Johnson (Nashua ETV), Vice-president Doris Ballard (Concord), Treasurer Chris Gentry (Concord), and Secretary Coleen Richardson (Bedford). Peter Pijoan (Wolfeboro) was appointed as recording secretary for both board and general meetings. Dick Gagnon was appointed as chair of the legislative committee.

NHCCM members were reminded to send response letters regarding PEG relevance as the U.S. House of Representatives begins to rewrite the Communications Act. CGI communications [a marketing firm based in Rochester NY] has been approaching town administrators about producing 3 minute promotional videos for towns at no cost. CGI in association with the community would solicit local sponsors to defray costs. These sponsors would be acknowledged in the video. This is obviously a task that local PEG channels can and maybe should do to show their relevance to their community.

The new NHCCM Website should be up and running soon. A report was given regarding the status of PEG station LRPA (Lakes Region Public Access based in Laconia) as their funding has been significantly reduced due to non-contributing "member towns." This has resulted in their longtime director being let go by the board. The station is still on

the air with a couple of part-time employees. The Board also set the meeting schedule for 2015. NHCCM has its own TelVue server for sharing files amongst member. They plan to hold a workshop on how-to technology, user groups for different brands of playback servers, roundtable discussions—all this in one April day.

P-e-t-e-r Pijoan,
representative from NHCCM

<http://nhccm.org/>



ACM-Northeast Region Board of Directors 2014-15

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Somerville Cmty Access Television (MA)
Appointed Members
Keith Thibault – representative to ACM natl.
Fall River Public Access TV (MA)
Zebulon J. Schmidt
Open Stage Media, Schenectady (NY)

State Chapter Representatives

Jennifer Evans
West Hartford Community Television (CT)
P-e-t-e-r Pijoan
Wolfeboro TV (NH)
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