

**Media Factory Board Minutes DRAFT
February 16, 2026 at 6pm**

In attendance: In-Person - John Billingsley, Keith Oppenheim, Dean Pierce, Seth Mobley and staff Patrick Heltz, Gin Ferrara and Adam Walker. (On-line - Colleen Goodhue, Ted LeBlanc, Jason Raymond, Eric Agnero, Duane Pearson)

1. Call to Order.

- a. Meeting called to order at 6:07pm.
- b. In lieu of a secretary, Deb Ellis agreed to take notes.
- c. We need a permanent secretary.

2. Public Comment

- a. None

3. Staff Department Reports (while typically done during Committee Reports we started the meeting with this. It was noted that board members appreciated this format.)

- a. **Production Department** – Adam Walker shared that they’re already busy in 2026. Some productions already in process in 2025 but won’t hit books until early in the year, including work for the Howard Center (including a video annual report) and a book launch for Dan Chasin’s new book about Bernie Sanders among others. The Production Department has invoiced for close to \$10,000 since the beginning of the year. Upcoming is Town Meeting Day which includes significant work and invoicing.
- b. **Content Department** - Patrick Heltz – Content Department is fully staffed for the first time in a while and getting back on track. One of the strategic goals is to have more content focused postings on the website. They’re on a good streak right now. Another big item is that the new website is underway. Data is being migrated and first pages are being designed. Looking forward to having more to share.
- c. **Education/Outreach** - Gin Ferrara – A new Education Coordinator who is “wonderful” has been hired. Also have 2 interns, 1 UVM student and one post-grad person. The interns are working on a narrative mockumentary about sugaring. Some upcoming events include “Generating debate about AI and Community Media”, and later in the month the All-Station Meeting of the radio folks. The department just had the first meeting in preparation for 2026 Crowdsourc.

4. Approve Minutes: January 19, 2025

- a. Minutes approved with the following correction: Under Grants, Vermont Public should be Vermont Access Network

- b. John moved to accept with changes. Deb seconded.

5. Financial Report

- a. Deb introduced the financial report. Seth will take the lead.
- b. Pre-report discussion - Before reporting Seth asked how he should navigate some funding issues in relation to other aspects of finances. Dean offered that as a public body we have to be in the open, but acknowledged it's a difficult line to tread in open meeting. If it feels necessary, we could go into executive session. There are strategic nuances to report that may or may not be appropriate to discuss in public. Dean asked if there's a contract between Comcast and the Media Factory. Seth affirmed. If so, that might be a reason to go into executive session as there are legal strategies to be discussed. How do we make sure MF's needs are met in the face of declining funding. As CPG (Certificate of Public Good) docket begins to ramp up, board members may want to hear about that. We need to understand when to go into executive session and when not to.
- c. **4000 & 4010 Capital Income** - Comcast 4th Q was down 6.5% for the quarter and 10% over the year. That's significant. We need to keep an eye on that. In general there's a lot of work being done on this at the state level. Getting projections from the Cable Companies is still on the list of things to do, but there are other questions that are bubbling up so the work being done with the state is taking top priority for now. Funding is #1 concern.
- d. **4100 Grants income** – in the Governor's Budget this line is “flat” so we can anticipate a similar amount in 2026. But note that VT Access Network's ask is \$1.9 million. Statewide advocacy efforts are going on so we'll wait and see how things sift out.
- e. **4130 Contributions Unrestricted** – higher than last reported because bookkeepers have kept working on the 2025 books. There are two generous donations that went directly into our bank account, and VTIFF \$1000 award, and some Give Butter donations. Seth wants to make sure there are no duplicate reports. But, overall, good news.
- f. **Expenses** - Total expenses should remain consistent, but because some newer staff are already on qualified plans and waived coverage,, numbers might change categories slightly.
- g. **7600 Capital Budget** – Because of good planning, there's a smaller discretionary budget so having discussions about how to respond, e.g. does it make sense to think about how that might affect emergenc purchases. Departments are identifying areas where they can bring down some accounts to provide flexibility for unforeseen needs.
- h. **Note: VAN is relatively fresh at requesting state funds**, but VAN funding is now written into the state budget. What the legislators need to hear is the need

to encourage the funding to go up. Good news is that there's level funding, but VAN will be asking for more.

- i. Colleen moves to accept the report. Eric seconds.

6. Committee Reports

- a. **Strategic Planning** - Seth has a department breakdown (cheat sheet or "keep track of record") that pairs with the strategic plan. It lists items that are set for 2026 enabling us to focus on what departments and the board are focusing on now. Seth encourages board members to look at the chart.
- b. **Ad-Hoc Voting Committee** Update (Keith, Seth, Ted). They'd like to share their report on the last vote and will submit it to the board for review before the next meeting. We'll discuss the committee recommendations in detail next meeting.
- c. **Inclusion Committee** According to Keith, met and impetus is to "take action" with a MF "roadshow" but felt "who are we" to do that on their own. The committee decided to attend the last staff meeting and learned that maybe a better idea is to pilot on a smaller scale. Adam shared some of the ideas that came out of the discussion – doing some type of a roadshow across the service area. More to come.

7. Other Business

- a. Eric's birthday was on Valentines Day! Happy Birthday!

8. Adjournment at 7:20

- a. Moved by Deb, seconded by Eric.