

PUBLIC FORUM PRESENTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES
BETHLEHEM PUBLIC LIBRARY
Tuesday 5 December 2017

PRESENT: Joyce Becker
Caroline Brancatella
Mark Kissinger
Harmeet Narang
Mary Redmond
Lisa Scoons
Brian Sweeney

Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, director

GUESTS: Chris McGinty, Head of Public Services
Andrew Reilly
Frank DeSorbo
Dennis Kariou
Nancy Benedict
Cori Irwin
Nathan Frank
Rabbi Nachman Simon
Keith Irish
Trudy Quaif
Richard Kilroe
Jim and Leslie Hudson
Maria Magdalena Slone
David Solomonoff

BCN-TV STUDIO PROPOSAL

From 6-8pm, the board discussed additional details regarding possible changes to BCN-TV studio services and heard feedback from the public. Submitted written comments are attached.

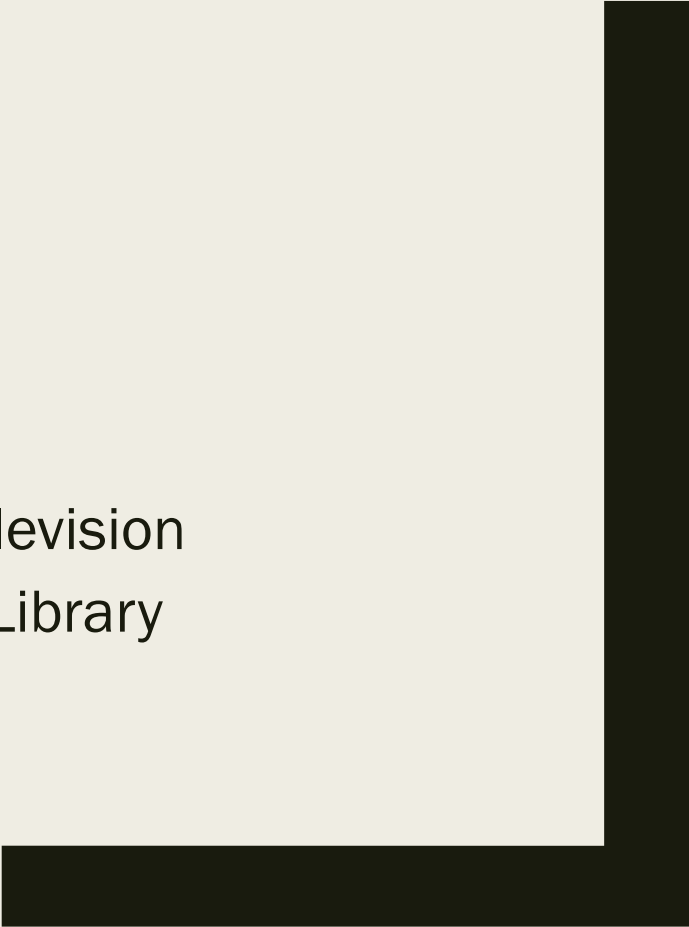
No board action was taken.

Recorded by Geoffrey Kirkpatrick, library director



BCN-TV

Proposal for changes to public access television
services provided by Bethlehem Public Library



Key Points

- Keep BCN-TV channel
- Town of Bethlehem, Bethlehem School District, and Bethlehem Public Library continue to be eligible to access PEG funds
- Studio Manager remains in dedicated BCN-TV studio position, 15 hr/week part-time position hired, continuous assessment of needed staffing
- Cablecasting/scheduling equipment and staff work areas move upstairs to the library mezzanine office
- Training and certification program is implemented for current show producers and other members of the public
- Studio becomes public space that can be booked for video production, audio projects, photo editing, podcasting, etc.
- Gradual reduction of staff availability for video production and editing services through Summer 2018

Keep BCN-TV channel

- Continue to provide an outlet for public, education, and government programs on a locally controlled channel for cable subscribers
- Provides a free-speech outlet on cable TV
- Scheduled shows, government meetings, and the community bulletin board are available via cable TV

PEG funds

- PEG funds are accessible to the Town of Bethlehem and Bethlehem School District for capital needs associated with recording meetings
- PEG funds are available to the library to equip the new studio makerspace, as well as any associated necessary work to move staff space to library office areas
- Less expensive equipment in the studio space means more and different equipment is available to the public, including items to check out through the Library of Things

Staffing

- Studio manager will assist in the transition from staff-produced shows to self-production and editing
- Part-time position will be necessary in order to take in shows and schedule programming, allowing more time for the Studio Manager to dedicate to direct public service
- Existing Public Services staff cross-trained for channel and studio functions to improve organizational stability
- No staff provision for increased recording of library programs

Staff functions moved to office areas

- Moving cablecasting/scheduling/community bulletin board equipment to staff areas helps to relieve cramped studio space
- Provides a less isolated working environment for staff
- Enhances integration of studio staff into the Public Services Department by being located with coworkers

Studio Makerspace

- Badly needed space is dedicated to public use
- Usable by patrons for most of the library open hours, including nights and weekends
- Provides opportunities for community to explore audiovisual technology
- Fulfills educational role of the library as included in the long-range plan
- Allows flexibility in outputs of the studio - use defined by the public
- Some existing equipment relocated to the makerspace from the library, freeing up more room in the library proper

Studio Makerspace – cont.

- More access for all community members
- Potential to increase support for school curriculum
- Increased digital literacy in the community - as outlined in the NYS library Vision 2020 plan

Implementation Schedule

- Winter to early Spring 2018
 - Focus on channel schedule
 - Hire part-time position
 - Develop training materials for new staff
 - Train new staff and cross train existing staff
 - Board explores revised Public Access Television and Studio-related policies
- Spring 2018
 - Move office space and necessary equipment upstairs to mezzanine in concert with HVAC renovation project
 - Install new equipment in Studio Makerspace
 - Train Public Services staff on new equipment
 - Begin to develop certification program and training materials for the public

Implementation Scheduled – cont.

- Summer 2018
 - Soft roll out of community production training
 - Focus on existing show producers
- Fall 2018
 - Full implementation of Studio Makerspace
 - Begin evaluating studio services
- Summer 2019
 - Formal board evaluation of service to be included in the new long range plan

From: Donotreply

Sent: Tuesday, December 05, 2017 10:38 AM

To: Bethlehem Director

Subject: email library director

From: Denis Foley

Subject: email the director

I and my family support keeping BPL TV as is.

The STOP DWI Victims panels wer started by Bethehem resident Betty Martin after her daughter Michelle was killed on the RT 85 bypass. For two decades the library channell has rebroadcast these. The station once 18 has been an educational outlet for resident authors as myself ,William N. Fenton and poet Mary Morianity. Residents need a staff person there especially us seniors. Thank You Denis Foley PhD RPA

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This e-mail was sent from a contact form on Bethlehem Public Library (<http://www.bethlehempubliclibrary.org>)

Comments on proposed closing of BCN-TV:

The Bethlehem Public Library has historically been top notch. The BCN-TV studio has been one of the more important services that the Bethlehem Public Library has provided to the community. It is now increasingly likely, that the library will discontinue this service and our town's public access TV channel will no longer be available for public use. The public access TV channel has provided local residents with a very useful way to present ideas, discuss current events, announce upcoming events, and inform local people about local issues. The studio was available for use by town residents for 35 years, and the cost was mostly covered by our cable channel TV providers. It was a very sweet deal for those of us who took advantage of the TV studio. Janice Irwin, who is a part time employee of the library, served as the producer of the shows, and was extremely helpful to those who produced shows in the studio. Funds were short, and the space was tiny, but Janice made the best of it, and she regularly produced high quality, 30 minute public access TV shows. These show were not only shown locally, but also sent to other public access TV stations, including Schenectady and Albany, to increase the number of viewers, and get the word out about issues that local people are interested in. Producers were also provided with file on DVD, so that the show could be uploaded to social media. The shows included topics such as Veterans activities, church services, environmental issues, local poetry, and discussions on the possibilities for peace.

Recently, the Bethlehem Library decided to discontinue this service, and has now closed the studio for production. Due to the objections from local people who either utilized the studio, or watched the public access channel, the library trustees have now offered an alternative proposal, which still effectively spells the end of for public access TV in Bethlehem. Although the Bethlehem library trustees have stated that they will hold off making a decision on the TV studio until their December meeting, they voted in their November meeting to support a proposal that will eliminate the production services of library staff, which is essential to having a functioning public access TV studio. The proposal states that the new library policy will make the equipment available to individuals to create their own show. It is unclear how this option would be possible to implement, since the production equipment is complex, the studio would have to be supervised to prevent breakage and theft, and the process of uploading the TV programs to the public access channel could not be done without a review, to make sure the content was appropriate. The library has presented a proposal that, on the surface, appears to continue to provide the public with access to the BCN-TV studio to produce shows that would then appear on our local channel. The reality is, there is no way the the proposed " Maker Space" could function without a library staff person to oversee, and provide production services.

We are living in a rapidly changing, technology driven, society, where corporate media controls much of our access to information, and most of our sources of information are controlled by commercial interests. The decision to close the public access TV studio, should not be undertaken without understanding that the future is uncertain, and so is our freedom of speech and our democracy in the United States. Local, public access TV is one source of information that is not influenced by political or commercial interests. Information, and action on the local level, are critical to preserving our democracy.

The BCN-TV public access TV studio in our library, was one of the services that made Bethlehem Public Library a valuable resource for community members. Our library should provide the community with free access to information. BCN-TV gave the people who wished to take advantage of this resource, a voice. Historically, our public libraries have been leaders in providing for free speech, and free access to ideas and information. It is time for a serious community discussion about what the priorities of our Bethlehem Public Library should be.

Trudy Quaif
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