

Pemi-Baker Community Access Media 2009 Annual Report

Update on the Transition to a Digital Facility

VHS tapes have been phased out for playback now that PSU PM Weather has switched to submitting MPEG-2 files for cablecast. While all camcorders record to digital format, most record to MiniDV, which is a digital format tape. Only one camcorder records to hard drive. The plan to complete the transition will include purchasing hard drive recorders compatible with these still useful MiniDV camcorders so all camcorders will record to hard drive. Otherwise pbCAM is now a fully digital facility and a model access center for other small communities in the State of New Hampshire.

In cooperation with Time Warner Cable, pbCAM was able to install infrastructure between Town Hall and Pease Public Library to facilitate the move of the playback server to the pbCAM office, maintain live cablecasts, and transform playback on both channels to the file-driven playback that has successfully functioned on pbGOV-3 in the previous year thanks to the playback server. Both channels operate from the same playback equipment, using digital files instead of physical media, which has translated into both a space savings and a cost savings. It has also allowed for full-day scheduling of pbGOV-20, the public and educational access channel, where previously scheduling was extremely limited due to tape and disc swaps and available number of playback decks.

Having both channels in one location means that emergency messaging can be enabled on both channels simultaneously without duplicating effort.

Programming and Bulletin Boards

While the videographer stipend has proved extremely successful in expanding pbCAM coverage of local meetings, keeping trained people in the pool of available help remains a challenge. The incentive for people to sign up to cover meetings is present, but in the case of live cablecasts from Town Hall, the workload can be intimidating for someone who is not employed to produce the meetings. The future of meeting cablecasts, and the ability to expand to cover more meetings, must include both simplifying the process in the Town Hall control room and possibly hiring a part-time Government Access Coordinator. If pbCAM is to expand to include other towns, a Government Access Coordinator would be essential, and funding provided from those towns would help support such a position to coordinate the fair access of all involved towns to pbGOV-3, the government access channel.

The bulletin boards on both channels has become much easier to manage on the new playback server. The new server-managed bulletin board offers

features to automatically manage timing and expiration of slides that are currently increasing efficiency. There is potential to use the server's user management features to allow Town departments to update their own slides, though policy needs to be developed before user access is granted. Plans are also in the works to make file access available to Town Hall, Plymouth Village Water & Sewer District, and SAU 48 to allow all three groups to have immediate access to video of meetings for minutes transcriptions and reference, which will translate into a time-savings and cost-savings for pbCAM by virtue of almost no need for making physical media duplications of these videos.

Future Development

Currently pbCAM operates out of a 10' x 11' Cablecasting Center, which also serves as the office and equipment storage, in the lower level of Pease Public Library. There is no studio space for community production, meaning pbCAM has to use community spaces as they are available. Community spaces are by nature inadequate for proper studio production work and provide distractions both for those working on productions and for those in the community spaces not involved with production. Operations in the Cablecasting Center also frequently cause disruption of activities in the adjacent community space. Working in partnership with Pease Public Library, pbCAM plans to expand to include studio, control room and office spaces. These spaces are segregated from community spaces in the planned Pease Public Library expansion project to resolve pbCAM space needs without continued or increased distraction to library patrons or community events.

Thanks

Volunteers who deserve many thanks include Gusti Buhrman, Kathy Capach, Rick Giard, Andy Kniskern, Wally Stuart, and PSU meteorology students. The staff, volunteers, trustees, and building committee of Pease Public Library deserve special praise for all time and resources they contributed to pbCAM. The Selectboard, Town Administrator, and office staff have been extraordinarily supportive.

Submitted by,
Jamie Capach
Executive Director
Pemi-Baker Community Access Media