

Community Television Association of Maine (CTAM) 1990 - 2023

CTAM Reflection

June 2023

By Randy Visser

I recently met Tony Vigue and John Goran, two of the founding members of the Community Television Association of Maine (CTAM), at the South Portland Town Hall to comb through 40 years of records from this unique, Maine non-profit organization. We were joined by two “younger” media activists, Moe Amaral and Nate Oliver, recently voted to the board of the newly formed Maine Community Media Association (MCMA). I explained to Tony that the experience for me personally was both profound, and cathartic.

It was profound for me because of the 40 years of memories that came rushing back after looking at documents from the many meetings we have had in this very room, and others like it across the state. I believe we all understood that this cleansing of the CTAM paper archives/records would most likely be the last time we met under its banner all these years later. Tony, John and I have, of course, aged along with the organization and the memories these documents conjured gave us each something to reflect on. Each new folder we lifted from the files revealed the names of people who have joined us in this work over the past 40 years; Kate Arno, Sally Hebert, Ned Lightner, Ivan Flye and Richard Turner to name a few. There were minutes from dozens, and dozens of meetings held around the state over the years. Each written narrative reflecting the unique gatherings that were held, the opportunities to network with one another around issues that are important to our cause, who was attending, and who would be responsible for the next round of work that had to be done. We swept through years of documentation carefully cataloged by me, Tony, Sally and Terri Wright, our last CTAM Chairperson. What a truly amazing testament to the minutia of creating and managing a non-profit organization with members spread around the state representing literally hundreds of community media advocates and municipal officials. Each new piece of paper brought back another rush of memories, which leads me to the cathartic piece of this experience.

Catharsis is defined as “a powerful emotional release that, when successful, is accompanied by cognitive insight and positive change”. That’s it in a word. I think I speak for the five of us who were present as the papers were either set-aside for posterity...or thrown into the big green recycle bin to be forgotten. Most of the paper content from seven boxes of CTAM archives were eventually tossed. Dues were collected, budgets were presented at the annual meetings and funds were spent to accomplish our goals. On a number of occasions, we would find something that sparked a positive memory, or an idea that had been shelved for one reason or another. Moe and Nate were gracious enough to hang-out and listen to us “old dudes” talk about the dredged up past while suggesting that, in fact, there were important lessons to be learned as we all try to forge ahead into a very unstable and rapidly changing communication landscape. That’s the “cognitive insight” part of the cathartic experience for me.

The “positive change” is harder to explain. The past 40 years of CTAM has allowed a small, but dedicated, group of Mainers (mostly volunteers) to form personal friendships and professional working

arrangements that gave our new movement a solid base of support to grow on. And grow it did. At one point I came across a membership list that included over 40 entities (mostly municipalities, but some NPO's) from across the State of Maine. Newsletters and conference programs dating back to the 1990's demonstrated how hard we all worked to educate people about the often-complicated process of forming, and managing, a local, community media organization.

For me personally, perhaps one of the most important "positives" from this experience was the Public Policy work that was done on our behalf. Tony's fingerprints could be found throughout the CTAM archives as we came across letters to state officials and national leaders who eventually came to respect our efforts and recognize CTAM's role on both a regional and national level. Letters from Tony to municipal officials imploring them to protect their interests and get involved. This is what we have done, together. This will be CTAM's legacy going forward. Something I'm proud to have been a part of.

So, to the "new guard" of the newly formed Maine Community Media Association, please don't forget where we came from. The hundreds, and hundreds of volunteer hours put in by dedicated Mainers who shared a vision of inclusivity in communications and access to local telecommunications during a time of tremendous technical change. Keep the lines of communication between your fellow activists open through constant interaction with other people doing this work in their own states and regions. And give each other a hand when needed. If nothing else, the large, green recycling bin that we wheeled out of the South Portland City Hall after purging the CTAM archives last week is a testament to the many, many hours of hard work and dedication this little organization generated over the years. Thank You.

CTAM - An Abbreviated History – 1990 – 2023

Compiled by T. Vigue

CTAM assisted dozens of towns with Cable Franchise renewals and non-compliance questions. These are the towns that we found had folders containing the details of those interactions:

Alfred, Arundel, Auburn, Augusta, Berwick, Baileyville, Bangor, Bar Harbor, Bath, Belfast, Bethel, Biddeford, Bingham, Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Bridgeton, Brunswick, Buckfield, Buxton, Camden, Cape Elizabeth, Carrabassett, Casco, Castine, China, Cumberland, Damariscotta, Dayton, Fairfield, Falmouth, Fort Fairfield, Freeport, Gorham, Gray, Greene, Harpswell, Hollis, Houlton, Jay, Kittery, Lewiston, Limerick, Limington, Lovell, Lyman, Madison, Millinocket, Naples, New Gloucester, New Sharon, Newcastle, Norway, Parsonsfield, Pittsfield, Portland, Rangeley, Raymond, Readfield, Richmond, Rockland, Saco, Scarborough, Sebago, South Paris, South Portland, Standish, Strong, Sydney, Temple, Union, Veazie, Waterboro, Waterville, Weld, Westbrook, Wilton, Windham, Wiscasset, Woodland, and Yarmouth.

In addition, CTAM personnel fielded phone calls and/or provided in person visits with Baldwin, Calais, Caribou, Chelsea, Eliot, Ellsworth, Ft Kent, Glenburn, Hallowell, Hiram, Jay, Kennebunk, Kennebunkport, Leeds, Ogunquit, Old Orchard Beach, Old Town, Orono, Phippsburg, Rumford, Sanford, Searsport, West Bath, the City of Westbrook and York. These included technical consultations, assistance with equipment connections, recommendations for vendors and new equipment in addition to franchise related questions.

According to a June 2021 subscriber count from Charter, PEG channels were available to 234,846 of their subscribers in Maine. Comcast has an estimated 40,000 subscribers in their 15 communities. Bee Line Cable, Pioneer Broadband, Tidewater Telcom, Verizon and AT&T make up another estimated 10,000 combined.

CTAM also assisted other non-profits such as the Greater Portland Council of Governments, The League of Women Voters, Maine Women's Lobby, Common Cause, The Maine D.E.P., The Maine Humanities Council, Westbrook Vocational Technical High School, Portland Area Technical High School, The University of Southern Maine, and Cumberland County to name a few.

On June 28, 2007 CTAM partnered with Common Cause, the League of Young Voters, community radio stations WMPG and WERU, MoveOn.org, the Community Television Network, The Newspaper Guild, Free Press, The Consumer Federation of America, Consumers Union, Prometheus Radio Project, United Church of Christ Office of Communication, Inc., The U.S. Public Interest Group and others who participated in an FCC Hearing held in Portland Maine to testify against media consolidation.

In addition to attending many regional and national conferences, CTAM Board and/or members presented at three Maine Municipal Association Conferences, at least Four North East Alliance Regional Conferences and at least Five ACM Conferences. In 1996 CTAM and CTN hosted the Dynamic Community Television Conference in Portland with Governor Angus King as the Moderator.

CTAM also submitted testimony both for and against FCC Rulings and Congressional legislation on several occasions, working with the National League of Cities, the US Conference of Mayors, The National Association of Counties, the Alliance for Community Media, The Alliance for Communications Democracy, the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors (NATOA), Common Cause and the Washington DC Law Firm of Spiegel McDiarmid.

CTAM authored the Maine Municipal Association's Guide for Regulation of Local Cable Franchises for Municipal Officials in 2008 and wrote several successful cable regulation bills, namely :

- 2003 – An Act to Protect Network Neutrality - failed under industry pressure but the Legislature adopted a first in the nation “Resolution to Support Network Neutrality” and mandated the Office of the Public Advocate to publish a report on the status of national Net Neutrality initiatives.
- 2008 – LD2133 An Act To Amend the Cable Television Laws and Establish a Model Cable Franchise Agreement – Passed into Law in 2009
- 2019 – Maine LD1371 An Act To Ensure Nondiscriminatory Treatment of Public, Educational and Governmental Access Channels by Cable System Operators – PL245 passed into law in 2021.
- 2021 – Maine LD 920 An Act To Promote Oversight of and Competitive Parity among Video Service Providers – passed both houses of the Legislature, vetoed by the Governor.

CTAM wrote or testified In favor:

- 2004 – Maine LD 222 An Act Providing for Regulation of the Cable Television Industry by the PUC - failed
- 2005 – Maine LD 947 Cable Television Franchise Board - failed
- 2010 - HR 3745, The Community Access Preservation Act (CAP Act) – stalled in committee
- 2022 – S. 3361 Protecting Community Television Act – Re-introduced in this session of Congress
- 2023 – Maine LD 1967 An Act to Support Municipal Franchise Agreements- pending for second session

Testified In Opposition:

- 2006 - FCC 621 Rule and Order -enacted
- 2005 - S. 1504, The Broadband Investment and Consumer Choice Act of 2005 - failed
- 2006 – S. 2989 The Franchise Reform Act of 2006 - failed
- 2006 - HR 3146 Video Choice Act - failed
- 2006 – H.R.5252 - Communications Act of 2006 -failed

The following is a partial list of Non-profits who used South Portland Community Television Bulletin Board for announcements and video programming, feel free to add your own!

Organization Name

AAA Safety Videos

AARP Informational Videos

Allen Ave. Unitarian U. Church

ALS

American Legion Post # 35

Animal Refuge League

Animal Welfare Program

Army NewsWatch
Art in the Park
Bath Community Forestry Committee
Bath Skate Park Center
Beach to Beacon
Big Brothers Big Sisters
Birth Roots
Blue Point Church
Bonnie Eagle Middle School
Brain Injury Association
Cape Elizabeth/South Portland Rotary
Casco Bay Estuary Project
Chalkboard
Cheverus High School
Children's Museum
Christ the Redeemer
City of South Portland - Public Works
Coast to Coast
Community Issues; Democrats
Compass Project
Cumberland County News
CVS Pharmacy
Divorce Perspectives
Educational Homestay Program
Elm Street Methodist Church
Fair Bear Hunting
Family Literacy Fair
First Congregational Church
First United Methodist Church
Flying Changes Center
Friday Forum
Get Real. Get Maine
GO MAINE
GodsWord
Greater Portland ME Chapter
Guiding Good Choices
Healthviews
Holy Cross School
Homeland Security Alert
Immanuel Baptist Church
Independent Transportation Network
Knights of Columbus
Ladies Aux. Veterans Foreign War
Liberty News
Lighthouses on Parade
Maine Bureau Of Parks & Lands
Maine Fair Trade Campaign

Maine Jewish Film Festival
Maine Medical Center
Maine Medical Center
Maine Municipal Association
Maine Wildlife Park
Maine Winterfest
Maine Woods N' Waters
Maine-ly Issues
Make A Wish Foundation
Martin's Point Health Care
MDOT
ME Alzheimer's Association
ME Animal Coalition
ME Bureau of Veterans Affairs
ME Cancer Foundation
ME Chapter, National MS Society
ME Citizens for Clean Elections
ME Emergency Management Agency
ME Green Independent Party
Memorial Golf Tournament
Mercy Health Center
Millcreek Summer Concerts in the
Park
Music da Camera
Musicians of Maine
NCMEC
News Maine Senate Majority Office
North Atlantic Figure Skating Club
Ollie Skatepark Project
Open Farm Day
Osteoporosis Healthcare Network
PACTS
Park Avenue Church of God
Peace Action Maine
Petco
Pine Tree Council Boy Scouts
Portland Celiac/ DH Support Group
Portland Harbor Museum
Portland Literacy
Portland North
Portland Regional Chamber
Portland Stage Company
Portland Water District
PROP
Red Cross Disaster Action Team
RSVP
RWS
S.P. Community Contact

S.P. National Little League
S.P. P. Patrolmen's Assoc.
S.P. Police Dept. Events
S.P. Public Library
S.P. Public Works Dept.
S.P./ C.E. TRAIT
S.P.F.D. Events
S.P. Recreation Center Senior Programs
Saint Joseph's College
Salt Institute Documentary Studies
Serenity House
Series of Talks
Sexual Assault Response Services
Skillin Playground Project
SMCC - Special Events
SMCC Sports Talk
SOURCE
South Portland Boys Lacrosse Team
South Portland City Clerk's Office
South Portland Democrats
South Portland Ice and Hockey
South Portland Land Trust
South Portland Lions
Southern ME Agency on Aging
Special Olympics Maine
Spring Harbor
Spring Point Festival
ST. John Evangelist Church
ST. Louis Polish Church
ST. Patricks' School
STRIVE
The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital
The Creative Resource Center
The Deering Lions Club
The Lincoln Club
The Maine Mall
The New England Bible College
The Portland Players
The Stage
Thinking Ahead
Thorton Heights United Methodist
TOPS
Train Time Series
US Sea Cadets
USM University of Southern ME
Veteran's Voice
Vietnam Tribute

VNA Home Health Care
Walk for Diabetes
Wayside Soup Kitchen
White Mem. Seventh Day Adventist
WMPG
WMSJ Backstage
World Affairs Council of Maine
YES, to Youth
York County Audubon Society
Youth Alternatives