

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

SERVING THE TOWNS OF LEE, LENOX, STOCKBRIDGE,
GREAT BARRINGTON, AND SHEFFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS





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COVER PHOTO:

Executive Directors Mike Sinopoli on the right (Dalton TV) and Rich Frederick on the left (CTSB) discuss "What is Community Television?" in front of the largest green screen in Western Massachusetts at the Studio at CTSB.

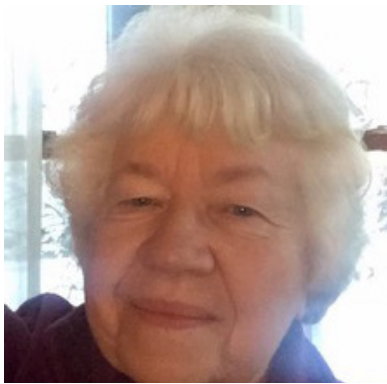
OUR MISSION

CTSB is a 501(c)(3) membership organization formed to facilitate, encourage, and promote community involvement in the production of locally originated, non-commercial television and other media. The program content may be informative, educational, or entertaining.

CTSB serves the towns of Lee, Lenox, Stockbridge, Great Barrington, and Sheffield.

Rich Frederick interviews Lee residents and CTSB members Eugene Mamut & Irina Borisova about the war in Ukraine for CONVERSATIONS.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



MARY PHILPOTT
CTSB BOARD PRESIDENT

This past year CTSB continued to add to its list of successes despite the constantly changing environment created by the pandemic. The station continued to increase its visibility and its role as a very important resource for the towns served by CTSB. What CTSB offered to the community was a clearer view how the local governments function; showed the variety of talent in our area; and connected families and friends to events that they couldn't otherwise attend. CTSB reached out to organizations and individuals to increase awareness of the opportunities and services offered, and created new collaborations. The result was the addition of an even greater diversity of programming and viewers.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

I would like to thank the Board for their continued help promoting and overseeing the work of the station this past year. It is important that our communities are aware not only of our services, but also our challenges especially in regard to funding for the future. Planning for the future is a difficult process not only because of funding, but also because of the rapid changes in technologies. The Board is grateful to Rich Frederick and the Staff who help keep us educated in these matters so that we can make informed decisions for the continued success and future of CTSB.

CTSB STAFF

On behalf of the Board, I would like to commend the Staff for their commitment to the station and communities we serve. The Staff did a wonderful job this past year, many times working under very difficult situations, to provide the services needed. Not only were their goals and tasks completed, but they also had to come up with creative solutions for some challenging issues. I would like to commend the Staff on their willingness to help and implement new ideas and projects, and the assistance they provided to organizations and individuals. This is greatly appreciated.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

We thank our volunteers for all they contribute to the success of CTSB. We encourage the community to come and learn more about us, join us, take advantage of our resources. We look forward to working with more groups to provide expanded offerings. Educating, encouraging and implementing new ideas, is a major goal.

We look forward to attracting new members who would like to create their own programs as well as greater involvement of our present members. If you are interested in serving on our Board, please get in touch with us. CTSB is an amazing resource for our community and you could be part of this organization.

“We encourage the community to come and learn more about us, join us, take advantage of our resources.”

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

GREAT BARRINGTON

Laurie Freedman, Secretary

LEE

Gary Allen, Treasurer

Mary Philpott, President

Jennifer Leahey

LENOX

Al Saldarini, Vice President

Benjamin Finley

STOCKBRIDGE

Jonathan Williams

SHEFFIELD

Ben Hillman

AT LARGE

Stephen Radin

Paul Teppar

STAFF

Richard Frederick

Executive Director

Erica Spizz

Operations Manager

Steven Borns

Production Coordinator

Shane Bruno

Administrative & Communications
Coordinator



From our Instagram @CTSBTV

"Inside Video Games" with Lucas—our youngest producer!

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT



RICHARD FREDERICK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Over the past year, the staff at CTSB has worked hard to implement new technology, improve our ability to livestream programs, attract new members and offer classes.

We covered the five town school district and select board meetings with our three Zoom accounts bringing important information right into your home on both our channels and website. Our studio is busy with members working on projects and we are gearing up for high school graduations and annual town meetings. Summer will bring concerts in the park and sporting events. We hope to add additional staff this year to cover more community events and sports.

We have been financially conservative while growing and our solar panels continue to pump

out clean energy into the grid. Our advertising campaign has helped create more awareness of where to find us; we advertise on the Berkshire Edge, Shopper's Guide and have postcards, hats and decals going out into the community every day. Our wish list contains just a couple items, more community involvement and support as we head into the unknown.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

My seven-year-old son is a big fan of the soundtrack from the movie *Frozen* and we often listen to the track, "Into the Unknown." This song feels quite relevant today and gives us both a sense of adventure in not knowing what comes next. Fear of the unknown has been something we have all felt over the past couple years. The unknown level of Covid in our community, a housing crisis, and the realization that community television will eventually be defunded have all been on our minds here at CTSB.

So we press on and work hard towards a positive outcome. We envision the future to be positive. That's our job. The CTSB staff and board along with the Five Town Cable Advisory Committee have been working hard to keep CTSB financially sound and negotiate a new contract with Spectrum. CTSB has delivered our three channels;

Public 1301, Education 1302 and Government 1303, not only on cable but streaming in high definition on our website. Our facilities, equipment and staff are the best they have ever been and our dedication to bringing local information to our community is our top priority. I am also proud of the fact we have young adults learning and spending time in our training room.

CTSB receives our funding through cable subscriptions. Currently there are between 5,000–6,000 cable subscribers in the five towns and as cable package prices increase, that subscriber number is decreasing every day. While our funding has remained consistent, we all know someone who subscribes to internet only. I often feel like a hypocrite as I cut the cable years ago and watch CTSB online only. CTSB has invested heavily in providing our content online, as most people prefer to view us on their computer or smartphone. Online, we broadcast "live" and in high definition and provide the ability to search our archive and watch at your convenience. This is not possible on cable. Spectrum only allows enough bandwidth for our content to be viewed in standard definition and our channel numbers cannot easily be located unless you run across one of our local advertisements listing our channel numbers in the 1300's.

I have been working in broadcasting since the early 1990's and the industry admits that cable is slowly being replaced by the Internet. Online viewing will be the way of the future as cable will be obsolete in 10 years—you can watch pretty much anything online including CTSB and local news with the exception of live national sporting events. PEG (Public, Educational and Government) stations across the state and country will need to be funded through internet subscriptions—either by fees or taxes added to streaming services such as Netflix. Streaming will pass through our community lines on both public and private lands. Streaming platforms must give back to support local community media. How else would we be able to educate ourselves about what our town governments and school boards are doing? Citizens would need to attend all meetings in person to be aware of critical issues affecting our communities, for example, General Electric burying PCBs in Lee.

LEGISLATION IS CURRENTLY BEING PRESENTED TO KEEP PEG STATIONS FROM GOING DARK.

The following news article is one of many written about the current circumstances surrounding community television and shows how the issue is affecting communities across the Baystate.

STATE LEADERS PROPOSE A “STREAMING ENTERTAINMENT FUND” THIS IS BEST DESCRIBED IN THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE WRITTEN BY STELLA LORENCE, A REPORTER WITH THE BOSTON UNIVERSITY STATEHOUSE WRITING FOR THE SUN CHRONICLE.

BOSTON — Community media centers could see a new flow of funding from a fee on streaming services such as Netflix and Disney+ through a proposed bill in the State House of Representatives.

The bill would require streaming services to pay 5% of all revenue generated from sales in Massachusetts for use of the “public right of way” infrastructure. The idea behind the fee is similar to the current policy requiring cable companies like Comcast to pay a “franchise fee” to the cities and towns they operate in for use of the physical cables.

Funds generated from the fee would be collected in a new “Streaming Entertainment Fund,” which would be doled out to cities and towns based on population, with two-fifths earmarked for community media centers.

“People’s media consumption has changed,” said Rep. Paul Tucker, D-Salem, one of the co-sponsors of the bill, in testimony at a recent hearing. “We know that people are changing from cable to streaming, but what hasn’t changed is the critical need for local programming.”

Tucker said Salem’s community access television viewership jumped during the pandemic. Community media representatives at the hearing echoed the trend, as did Peter Gay, executive director of North TV, the community access channel serving North Attleboro and Plainville.

“At the height of the pandemic, we were an invaluable source of information,” Gay said.

North TV has lost two full-time employees and an estimated 18% of its revenue in the last four years, Gay estimated.

James Jones, operations manager of DoubleACS, said some of his colleagues in community media have seen a revenue reduction of between 20% and 50%.

“With each passing month, these reductions are accelerating and it is only a matter of time before many centers will be forced to cease their operations,” Jones wrote in an email. “So, the urgency is now; it can’t wait another two years.”

One motivation for the bill is to make sure local media has a consistent funding source as people choose to “cut the cable” in favor of streaming services like Netflix or Hulu. But streaming services reject the bill’s new fee as the way to keep the cash flowing.

While not denying the importance of community media centers, the companies say they shouldn’t have to pay a fee since they don’t use the same public infrastructure that cable companies do.

“The bill imposes a new regressive tax that has a disproportionate impact on those living on fixed incomes or simply seeking a more affordable option,” said Julie Pearlman, testifying on behalf of Dish Network’s streaming service Sling TV.

Pearlman explained that customers who get internet service from a cable internet service provider, like AT&T, already pay a 5% fee for use of the infrastructure. She said imposing a second 5% fee on streaming services would be redundant.

Lawmakers see it differently.

“This is not a tax,” Tucker said. “This is simply taking a reset on the new options since the law was put in place.”

Joan Meschino, D-Hull, the bill’s other co-sponsor, said community media has become part of the “fabric” of the state’s communities, and can’t be allowed to go unfunded.

“The way I think about it is what are the ways companies should be investing in these local communities?” Meschino told The Sun Chronicle. “I look at this as updating the law to keep pace with technology.”

David Gauthier, president of MassAccess, a nonprofit organization comprised of and advocating on behalf of community media, approached Meschino about bringing the bill forward this session after a similar version last session was not advanced.

He warned that without interference from the Legislature, community media could “go the way of the video cassette tape.”

“There are certain segments of the population who prefer traditional cable,” Gauthier told The Sun Chronicle. “Eventually, the content delivery will change entirely, and cable will cease to exist. When that happens, does that mean community media won’t exist anymore?”

Gay supports the bill, but said if it were up to him, he’d change the way the fee is levied. Rather than impose 5% on streaming services, Gay said it would make more sense to extend the franchise fee that already exists for cable to telephone and internet too. That way, the fee is still clearly for using the public right of way, and the revenue continues if consumers stop cable service but continue getting their internet or telephone service through those companies. That method would also likely yield more money for community media, Gay said.

“The reason there’s a franchise fee on cable TV is because the Comcasts of the world are making billions by using the public right-of-way in our communities,” Gay said.

John Sudish, who testified on behalf of Comcast, said the discussion around the bill leaves out the perspective of consumers.

“Comcast recognizes the importance of community access television to the communities we serve,” Sudish said. “I’ve heard from the beginning of my career that people want more choices for consumers and there’s never been more video choice than they have now.”

Gay also said that while he welcomes the funds from the proposed bill, he’s not as concerned with the drop in cable subscriptions and has talked to “industry experts” who expect the decline to eventually level out.

A federal District Court in Nevada held in September that streaming services — in this case Netflix and Hulu — are not “video service providers” as defined by Nevada’s state law, and therefore not subject to the state’s franchise fee. However, 11 states collect revenue from streaming services, mainly by applying state sales taxes to streaming service subscriptions.

Gauthier pointed out the distinction, but said the Massachusetts bill stands out as a way to share the wealth.

“We look at it as something a little bit different,” Gauthier said. “We saw it as an opportunity to benefit not just community media, but the towns and municipalities too.”

As a lifelong journalist, I am open to both sides of the situation; no one wants more taxes or fees added to their subscriptions, but this should not be the demise of local access television. This should be a new beginning where the big tech and streaming companies give back. Their annual profits are in the billions and stream across lines that run down every street in the five towns.

While all this plays out through legislation, CTSB will continue to provide transparency in school and town board meetings.

BROADCAST YOUR VOICE TO THE WORLD.

TELL THE STORY OF SOMEONE IN YOUR COMMUNITY.

USE OUR AIRWAVES TO MAKE A PLEA TO BETTER YOUR COMMUNITY.

As we move into the unknown, what would happen to a community when there is no longer a place to speak up or hear the voices of your neighbors? What then? That’s a trip into the unknown I would rather not take.

Let your legislators, town officials and cable companies know you support community access television and help us by Watching, Joining and Learning here at CTSB.

RICHARD FREDERICK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TREASURER'S REPORT



GARY ALLEN
CTSB BOARD TREASURER

The latest financial information audited by our CPA firm is for 2020. The amounts here are accurate, but un-audited and include the highlights of where we stand as of the end of February 2022. CTSB, because of regular income from Spectrum, is in very good financial shape.

ASSETS

The building is valued at \$630,000 and the land at \$150,000 and we paid off the mortgage during 2021. The solar installation cost \$175,000 and was paid for in 2020. We have studio, editing, and broadcasting equipment valued at more than \$250,000.

Our building has excellent facilities for recording and editing programs, conducting training, and holding meetings. Our solar panels reduce our electric bills and will provide "SREC" income through 2031.

We have an investment fund of \$60,000 and a bank account of \$90,000 which are our reserve fund of \$150,000 for future emergencies. We have received the 2022 franchise income from Spectrum and have \$615,100 on hand, which is more than enough to pay our operating expenses for 2022.

LIABILITIES

The mortgages on the building and the solar array are both paid off as of the end of 2021. We have no other significant outstanding bills.

EXPENSES AND THE BUDGET

The Finance Committee reviews expenses and the balance sheet each month as a double check on the Executive Director and me for controlling expenses. We consistently operate below the approved budget.

The current year balance sheet and the income statement (un-audited) are available anytime to the public at the station. The 2020 audited statements will be available once we receive them (expected in March).

Please e-mail me (Gary@CTSBTV.org) or Rich (Rich@CTSBTV.org) if there are any questions on CTSB's finances and I will be happy to answer them.



Gary@CTSBTV.org

Rich@CTSBTV.org

ADMINISTRATIVE COORDINATOR'S REPORT



SHANE BRUNO
**ADMINISTRATIVE &
COMMUNICATIONS
COORDINATOR**

Throughout 2021, CTSB continued on a similar path as what had been established in the year prior in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As of my writing this, in March 2022, there is a cautious optimism about a return to normalcy, although many changes are here to stay. Many meetings will continue to be held virtually via Zoom for the foreseeable future, and training will likely continue to be provided here at CTSB on an as-needed basis—don't be afraid to ask if you want to learn something!

OUTREACH

All of our programming from the start of 2021 onward has been uploaded to YouTube and cross-posted to our Facebook and/or Instagram page in addition to being available on cable and on-demand on our website.

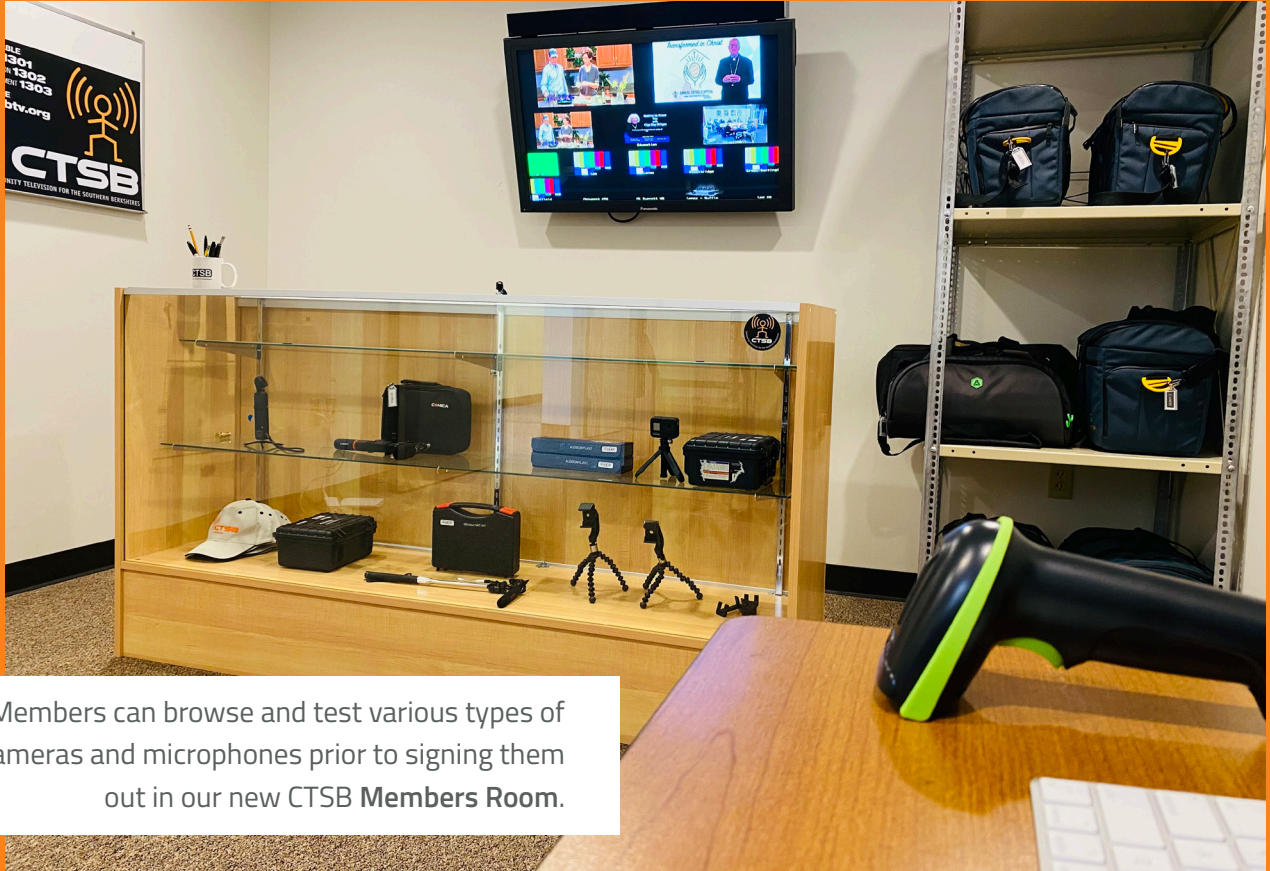
The streaming encoder we acquired in 2020 has proven to be very useful—we've gone live to Facebook and YouTube with a number of events broadcast from the high schools and town halls, including graduations, concerts, annual meetings, and more.



YOUTUBE VIEWS: 8,706 YTD
FACEBOOK PAGE VISITS: 1,445
INSTAGRAM PROFILE VISITS: 435

FACEBOOK IS THE BIGGEST EXTERNAL TRAFFIC SOURCE OF VISITORS TO CTSBTV.ORG

MEMBERSHIP



Members can browse and test various types of cameras and microphones prior to signing them out in our new CTSB **Members Room**.

CURRENT CTSB MEMBERSHIP: 129

If we continue the trends we've established over the last year, CTSB's reach will only grow as we continue to provide a valuable resource to our community.



CTSB



FALL FESTIVAL OF SHAKESPEARE

This year, for the first time, we live-streamed the entire 4-day Fall Festival of Shakespeare to our education channel, and to our website, in response to Covid restrictions that limited the in-person audience. This was a great success, and both CTSB and Shakespeare & Company received a lot of feedback from viewers all over the world who were thrilled to be able to watch the performances live from home.

According to web traffic data from Bear Mountain Group, here are the number of visits our website saw during the festival, with a few days on either side for comparison (the days of the festival are in bold):

Nov. 14: 52 visits	Nov. 19: 535 visits
Nov. 15: 77 visits	Nov. 20: 619 visits
Nov. 16: 150 visits	Nov. 21: 409 visits
Nov. 17: 173 visits	Nov. 22: 177 visits
Nov. 18: 617 visits	Nov. 23: 74 visits



As of March 15, 2022, we have raised a total of \$1937.72 from sales of Fall Festival DVDs, Blu-rays, and streaming links.

OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT



ERICA SPIZZ
OPERATIONS MANAGER

I am thrilled to be back in the role of operations manager and to see the significant improvements in infrastructure that occurred since I had left the position in 2016. I'm also extremely grateful for the endless support and open communication with Chris Graham and Nate Haney who masterfully evolved our systems and equipment in the intervening years.

The biggest improvement over the last year was the replacement of our aging broadcast servers. Our new Tightrope VIO servers have brought substantial upgrades to our core functionality including the ability to be live simultaneously on all three of our channels from separate locations, remote upload of programs directly to our servers (this has proven especially useful during the pandemic when staff have been working remotely),

and more backup recording channels. We are now able to broadcast network streams and our programming is always available in HD streaming and on demand on our website and OTT apps on iOS, Android, Apple TV, Roku, and Amazon Fire TV.

Our studio got a refresh with chromakey green covering the walls and floors enabling us to record immersive virtual environments. Berkshire legendary cinematographer Rick Sands rehung our lighting and consulted on the look and feel of our studio productions.

OTHER NOTABLE ADDITIONS TO EQUIPMENT:

- DataVideo HS-1300 portable video streaming studio
- Blackmagic Design HyperDeck Studio HD Plus
- Two new iMacs for our edit suites
- New phone system
- Weather camera mounted to the outside of our building and streaming 24/7
- Network switches upgraded to 10Gb



WEATHER CAMERA Mounted to the outside of CTSB and streaming 24/7

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR'S REPORT



STEVEN BORNS
PRODUCTION COORDINATOR

After a year of pandemic lockdowns, we were finally able to get vaccinated. Here at CTSB, we assumed we would be getting back to normal. However, Omicron and Delta breakouts kept activity to a minimum at the station.

We've had another year of using personal protective equipment (PPE) and being careful. In that time, the towns around South County have made their peace with technology. Most of our five towns have adopted some form of hybrid meeting combining Zoom participation with live audiences. This has opened up many more meetings to the public. As a result, it appears the shift to hybrid (in-person + remote) meetings may be a permanent one.

This means I now spend about half my time hosting Zoom meetings and guiding town boards, committees, commissions, and

participants through the process of participating on Zoom. The process hasn't always been free of complications. As you may remember, we did experience one "Zoom bombing" this year after which we added the security measure of Webinar licenses to our Zoom account. Monitoring town meeting calendars as the pandemic ebbs and surges and coordinating CTSB's calendar between remote or in-person meeting coverage has been challenging. Nevertheless, for the most part, the transition has been smooth and has allowed more South County residents of the five towns we serve to take an interest in their local community meetings.

Live streaming has the potential to bring every meeting to every member of the community on demand. In 2020 we patched together solutions that seemed as though they might be temporary. In 2021, we learned those temporary solutions were actually permanent adaptations to technology that makes CTSB's programming more accessible to members of the community regardless of physical barriers. This year, 2021, we realized we had made a big pitcher of lemonade from the lemons COVID-19 delivered. Thank you for making it a good one.

A special thank you for the support of fellow staff, our Board, and to former Operations Manager Nathan Haney who stewarded a major upgrade to our Tighrope program playback system.



It's your community. **watch**



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