

Traverse Area Community Media

12th Annual Report to Local Government Sponsors

City of Traverse City

East Bay Charter Township

Charter Township of Elmwood

Charter Township of Garfield

Presented by:



Innovative ideas for sustainable communities since 1993

Land Information Access Association
324 Munson Avenue, Traverse City, MI 49686
www.liaa.org

September, 2020

Introduction

The nonprofit **Land Information Access Association** (LIAA) began operating the public- and government-access cable television stations for northwest Lower Michigan on July 1, 2008. This is our 12th major report concerning the development and operation of the public- and government-access TV systems. This report describes the work, undertaken by LIAA's **Traverse Area Community Media (TACM)** staff members and active volunteers, to record and highlight many aspects of our community both on cable TV and online. These efforts are being undertaken with the support and participation of the **City of Traverse City** and **the Charter Townships of East Bay, Elmwood and Garfield**.

A Note About the Name

Prior to May 2019, **Traverse Area Community Media** was known as the **UpNorth Media Center**. Before this change of name, the media center was frequently mistaken for other area organizations and businesses that shared the "up north" name, and the confusion was exacerbated by a recent regional proliferation in the use of the "up north" name. This brand confusion prompted LIAA to explore alternative names. After much discussion, Traverse Area Community Media was chosen because it better describes what we do and where we work.

Last Year's Goals

In our last Annual Report, we set out a list of our top goals. Throughout the year, these goals helped us to make sure that we were striving to progress within an environment of changing media needs and consumption habits.

Here are those top goals, and what we did to meet them:

- **Expanded hours of operation**

In June of 2019, we expanded media center hours from regular business hours to Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. We did this in order to be more available for our volunteers with busy schedules. This change was very well received, and allowed media center staff to offer trainings and support sessions when volunteers were most available. On top of the extended hours, we were also available for trainings and hands-on technical support on weekends by request.

- **More opportunities to work on live productions**

For this reporting period, we facilitated 27 live broadcasts on CommunityTV 189. This far surpassed our previous year, when we broadcasted live on six occasions. Furthermore, we ensured that volunteers were able to work in every role of these live productions.

- **Broadened volunteer Production Team roles**

As with previous years, Camera Operator remained our most popular role on community event recordings. However, a small number of dedicated volunteers were able to serve as Directors and Zoom Webinar facilitators.

- **Increased community visibility**

This year, we used our increased number of live productions as a vehicle to get our name in front of viewers and reach out to new volunteers. This led to a dramatic 125% increase in YouTube traffic, as well as over two dozen new volunteers. Though we feel that we've made significant progress in the past year, we know that we will constantly need to work for the community in order to be seen and valued by the community.

Changes in Response to COVID-19

LIAA's office was closed to the public from March 16 through the remainder of the reporting year (June 30, 2020). During this time, we worked to continue offering as many of our regular services as possible, while reducing the risk of contributing to community spread of the COVID-19 virus.

In the week leading up to the State of Michigan's stay-at-home order, we moved quickly to test different teleconferencing solutions to aid in the facilitation, recording, and broadcasting of local government meetings. We then reached out to each of the jurisdictions in order to offer Zoom Webinar trainings, as well as in-meeting technical support. We will continue to support virtual government meetings for as long as they are wanted and needed.

For the public-access side of Traverse Area Community Media, our work has taken the form of virtual trainings, virtual community events, and increased access to our online video submission process. We also increased our support to member non-profits, offering free Zoom Webinar trainings, Zoom facilitation, and access to broadcast live programming on CommunityTV 189.

Next Steps for Traverse Area Community Media

Due to the current need to physically distance in our community, we have never relied so heavily upon media to connect with one another. This dramatic change in media usage and consumption is informing all of our goals for the year to come. Here are our central goals for the upcoming year:

- **Increased virtual participation options**

The current pandemic has forced much of our community engagement into virtual spaces. We are committed to expanding our use and promotion of using teleconferencing tools to create great community media.

- **Continued community event broadcasting**

Before COVID-19, we were beginning to cover a wider diversity of community events in the Grand Traverse area. And though our in-person coverage may be limited, we plan to continue using Zoom Webinars as a platform for virtual community events and their broadcast. We will focus on events that are educational, arts-focused, hyper-local, and encouraging of civic engagement.

- **Increased educational programming**

Over the past two years, we have worked closely with MiCareerQuest, Newton's Road, Grand Traverse Area Manufacturing Council, Disability Network, and Inland Seas Education Association. We plan to continue and expand our support of these groups by helping them take their events virtual.

- **Major equipment upgrades**

Along with streamlining processes for volunteers, we are also aiming to simplify our in-house media management and broadcast workflow. Currently, we are working with two video servers (Channel 189 and 191) that were originally purchased in January of 2009. A video server is responsible for storing and scheduling all of the media on the television channels, as well as switching between different video sources. Our existing servers are highly capable, but their software is difficult to use by modern standards. The new video servers will offer expanded file support, native support for broadcasting virtual meetings, higher resolution playback of media, easier program scheduling, and much more. This will be a complex process, requiring dozens of hours of training, and multiple months to fully transition. Though it will be a major technical challenge for our team, we see it as a necessary step to improve the services that we offer.

- **Increased accessibility for disabled community members**

We will work with regional partners in order to improve accessibility for disabled volunteers, visitors, trainees, and viewers. We will implement changes that make our building more navigable for those with physical disabilities. Additionally, we will undergo an accessibility audit of our trainings and media in order to provide more value for those with hearing or visual impairments as well as learning disabilities.

Summary of Community and Local Government Benefits

LIAA's Traverse Area Community Media provides many services to the participating local governments and citizens of the Grand Traverse region. Some of these core services are described below.

Government-Access Television – Traverse Area Community Media provides video acquisition, scheduling, transcoding (i.e., changing media formats) and cablecast services for the City of Traverse City and the Charter Townships of East Bay, Elmwood and Garfield, as well as Grand Traverse County. We also contract with, schedule, and supply trained video operators to the participating local governments.

Video Streaming and Multi-function Website – Citizens use the Traverse Area Community Media website (www.TACM.tv) to watch *CommunityTV* and *GovernmentTV* channels streaming 24/7. Programs are also available for playback on-demand through the website. The website also offers an up-to-the-minute *Community Calendar* (with events contributed by the public) and TV schedule. For video producers, the website provides an easy way to submit video for playback.

Video Training and Education Classes – Traverse Area Community Media provides Field Producer and Studio Producer trainings for organizations and individuals. Traverse Area Community Media also works with area schools to provide instruction for specific projects or classes.

High-Quality Television Studio – Traverse Area Community Media provides citizens with access to a professionally equipped, automated TV studio.

Audio and Video Editing Stations – Traverse Area Community Media offers a hands-on computer laboratory used for instruction and for local producers to edit and complete their projects. We offer both professional and consumer-level editing software, along with services that can provide music, video clips, graphics and other enhancements for video projects.

On-Site Technical Assistance – Traverse Area Community Media's highly qualified staff members are available to answer questions and provide technical assistance 50 hours per week and as requested on weekends.

Scheduling of Local Content – Local producers are assured that the video content they submit will be cablecast quickly and predictably, with more than one play.

Useful Viewer Services – Our channels carry an attractive, easy-to-read *Community Calendar*. Programming schedules are regularly posted. We have also negotiated the ability to post *CommunityTV* channel programming in the on-screen cable guide, allowing viewers to see what's playing and schedule DVR recordings.

Equipment Support and Installation for Local Governments – Traverse Area Community Media provides participating local governments with direct assistance to specify and install video equipment as needed to assure that public meetings are recorded and cablecast to local residents.

Background – PEG-Access Television

Under federal and state laws, municipal governments may demand access to the cable television delivery system as part of their franchise agreements with cable TV providers. Cable providers must supply public, educational and government (PEG) access TV stations for the delivery of content generated by and for the community. In northwest Lower Michigan, the City of Traverse City and East Bay, Elmwood and Garfield Charter Townships have joined together to exercise this option, protecting the delivery of four PEG-access TV channels.

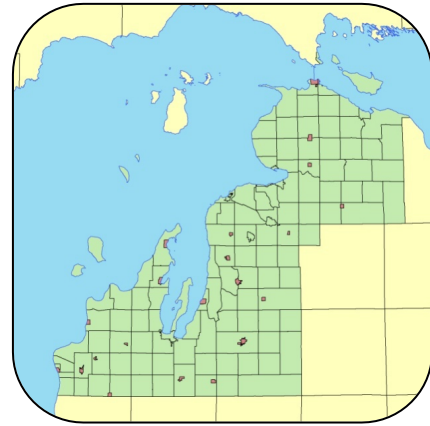


Figure 1: PEG Station Television Viewing Area

In July 2008, LIAA took over the operation of both the public- and government-access television services for northwest Lower Michigan (see [Figure 1: PEG Station Television Viewing Area](#)). Prior to that time, the public-access TV station was known as TCTV 2 (channel 2) and was operated by the Traverse Area District Library. The government-access TV station was operated by the City of Traverse City. Two educational-access TV stations were—and continue to be—operated by Traverse City Area Public Schools and Northwestern Michigan College respectively.

In accepting the responsibility of providing both the public- and government-access TV services, LIAA offered a new approach, with improved public services, greater technical capacity, and better viewing experiences. We have worked to provide community TV services comparable to those available anywhere, continually enhancing citizen education experiences, developing higher-quality video content, and offering dependable technical support for citizens and participating governments.

In March 2014, Charter Communications moved to an all-digital format and relocated all PEG TV channels to the 180s and 190s. Viewers now find public-access TV as CommunityTV on Channel 189, and government-access TV as GovernmentTV on Channel 191. During discussions about the channel change with Charter, CommunityTV was able to secure the ability to display programming in the on-screen schedule guide through the company Rovi. CommunityTV programming began appearing on the schedule in March 2014.

Summary of Community and Government TV Services and Operations

LIAA Oversight – Founded in 1993, LIAA is a nonprofit community service organization with 27 years of experience in helping citizens, nonprofits, and local governments to use media, technology and community planning to improve civic engagement. LIAA’s overall management and corporate policies are the responsibility of a volunteer Board of Directors composed of five well-regarded community leaders, educators, and foundation representatives from across the state. LIAA’s Executive Director, Technology Director, and Station Manager provide overall guidance and management of day-to-day operations for Traverse Area Community Media.

<p>LIAA Board of Directors</p> <p>John Egelhaaf, Executive Director Southwest Michigan Planning Commission</p> <p>Sandra Clark, Director Michigan Historical Center</p> <p>Alicia Kitsuse, Program Director Funders’ Network for Smart Growth & Livable Cities</p> <p>Pat McGinnis, City Manager City of Grand Haven</p> <p>Luke Forrest, Executive Director The Community Economic Development Association of Michigan (CEDAM)</p>

<p>GovernmentTV Advisory Committee Members</p> <p>Susanne Courtade Township Clerk, East Bay Charter Township</p> <p>Connie Preston Township Clerk, Elmwood Charter Township</p> <p>Lanie McManus</p>
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GovernmentTV Advisory Committee –

As the primary financial supporters of Traverse Area Community Media, representatives of the four participating governments gather quarterly to review media center operations and strategies, plan any services they may need from the media center, and discuss any government initiatives that may be of interest to or be informed by the media center. This committee has adopted the *Policies for the Operation of Government-Access Cable Television* that guide operation of GovernmentTV.

This committee ensures that the media center meets its contractual obligations to each of the participating governments.

Media Center Staff – LIAA’s Traverse Area Community Media staff consists of a full-time Station Manager and a full-time Media Specialist, each with extensive experience in TV operations and training. In addition, LIAA’s Financial Administrator, Technology Director, and Information Technology Specialists provide support for the media center, including contractor

management and scheduling, website development and support, and networking and hardware support.

2019-2020 Traverse Area Community Media Staff

Matthew Kern, Station Manager
Joe Torrence, Media Specialist
Kim McNeil, Financial Admin/GovTV Manager
Jim Muratzki, Technology Director
Rob Astor, IT Specialist
Paul Riess, Media Manager

Participation/Membership –

Membership in Traverse Area Community Media allows residents to submit content for playback on Channel 189 and gain access to our free video training courses. Individuals who live in any of the participating jurisdictions can be Traverse Area Community Media Members for free. In order to engage people from throughout the CommunityTV viewing region, individuals who live outside of the participating jurisdictions may become Members by paying a fee of \$50/year or \$6/month. All members are given the same level of access to training, equipment, and cablecast services.

Nonprofit organizations that wish to produce and cablecast their own shows can also participate in Traverse Area Community Media. These organizations pay a membership fee of \$100/year and receive the same services and support as individual Members. For example, member organizations are able to borrow equipment, use the studio, and receive training at discounted rates.

Equipment and Facilities – One of the most important tasks of public-access television is the maintenance and loaning of video equipment for community use. We also provide certified producers access to video editing workstations in LIAA’s computer lab, available Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. as well as any time upon request.

Additionally, we provide access to a remote-controlled video and audio studio and control-room facility within LIAA’s building. Among other things, the studio offers access to three remote-controlled High Definition (HD) cameras, a green screen for composited backgrounds, production lighting, a high-quality teleprompter, an array of microphones, audio mixers, and an HD camera switcher.

Programming – Another key role of Traverse Area Community Media is the transcoding, scheduling, and cablecasting of video content for both CommunityTV and GovernmentTV. In the past year, CommunityTV scheduled and cablecast 4,490 hours of programming (see [Figure 2: CommunityTV Programming Hours July 2019 to June 2020](#)). Over 2,658 hours of programming were also provided on GovernmentTV (see [Figure 3: GovernmentTV Programming Hours July 2019 to June 2020](#)).

CommunityTV Total Hours of Programming

July 2019 - June 2020

4,490 total hours

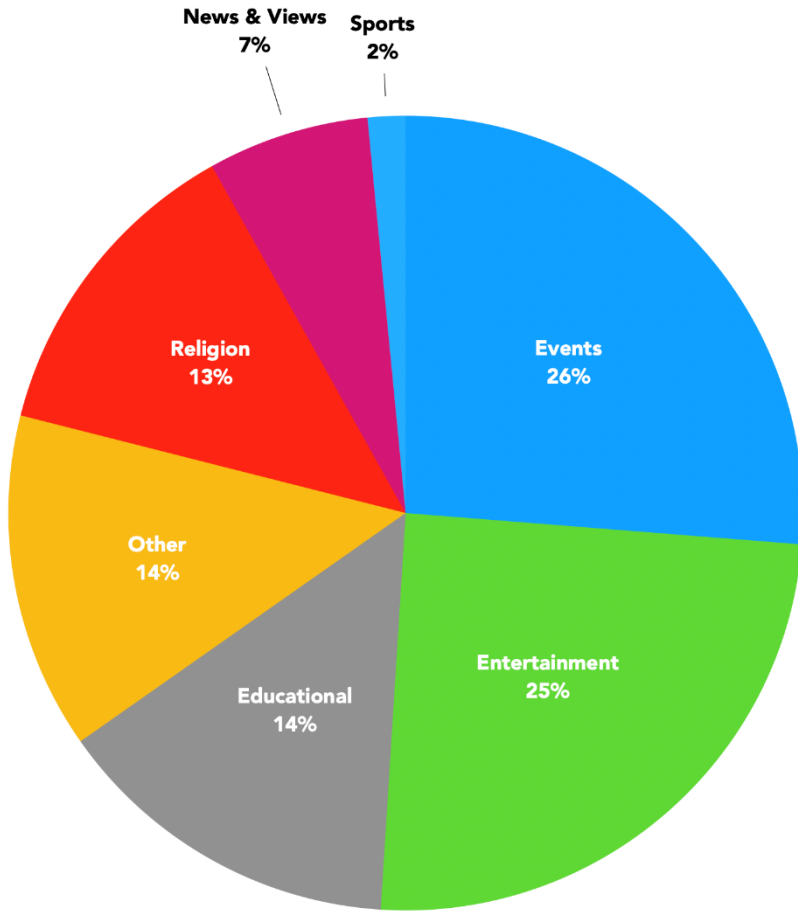


Figure 2: CommunityTV Programming Hours July 2019 to June 2020

GovernmentTV Total Hours of Programming

July 2019 - June 2020

2,658 total hours

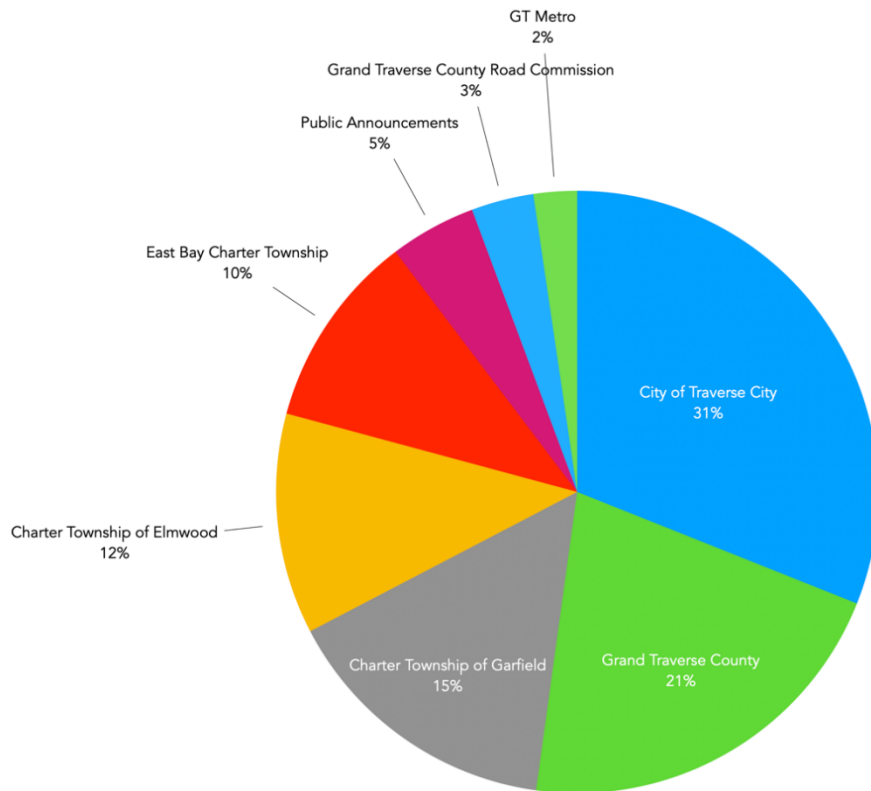


Figure 3: GovernmentTV Programming Hours July 2019 to June 2020

Video Production Training and Support – Another important goal of public-access television is education, training and support in the use of video production equipment, and in the art of telling stories or showing events with digital media.

All producers are required to take our *Producer Orientation*. In the past year, we have begun offering this training as a quick online video followed by a quiz. This provides participants with the basic concepts and rules of public-access video production and permits them to request airtime for a video presentation as a Certified Producer. There is no fee for this introductory course, and it is often combined with other classes.

We also offer a course for *Field Producers* that teaches people how to use cameras, lighting, microphones, and video editing equipment. This two-part course gives people the ability to operate and care for the mobile equipment and editing workstations available through Traverse Area Community Media. We promote this course to nonprofit groups with an offer to

have their volunteers trained to record their events. Graduates of this course are qualified to borrow and use the video production equipment at no charge (as long as their membership is current).

Our *Studio Producers* course gives members the ability to set up and operate the audio, video, and lighting equipment in the Traverse Area Community Media studio. They also learn how to use the green screen or other backdrops to record their show. Members who complete this course are qualified to use the studio to produce shows at no charge.

Once members are trained, Traverse Area Community Media staff provide ongoing assistance, such as equipment retraining, project planning help, and one-on-one video editing support.

In the last year, Traverse Area Community Media hosted 32 training courses, and logged an additional 279 hours of direct assistance to Producers.

GovernmentTV Management and Oversight – Traverse Area Community Media coordinates and manages government television services for the viewing region. This activity includes assistance in the video recording of local government meetings, transport and transcoding of the video products, coordination in scheduling cablecasts, and the actual cablecast of most programs. Additionally, the media center helps to specify, install and maintain the video equipment for local governments (e.g., cameras, digital data transfer systems), occasionally providing for improvements and repairs.

Traverse Area Community Media contracts with videographers to run the cameras and video switcher systems at roughly 25 different government meetings each month. The media is automatically transferred to Traverse Area Community Media over the Internet through digital data compression systems for streaming and cablecast.

Media center staff members work closely with local government officials to ensure that the video production equipment in each location is working properly, troubleshooting hardware and software problems.

Website – LIAA has a long history of creating and hosting websites for nonprofit organizations, local governments, and special projects. Traverse Area Community Media's website at TACM.tv is a key communications tool for CommunityTV, GovernmentTV, and all aspects of the media center. This website provides a regularly updated program schedule, news and notes, public comment opportunities, access to documents (such as the *Policies and*

Procedures), a Community Calendar, help for producers, and other information. The website also provides a place to submit content: Members may request airtime and send video through the website; organizations submit Community Calendar events which are then automatically shown on our TV channels and on the website; and our *Meeting reView* solution helps governments link agendas and meeting documents to meeting videos.

The website provides quick links to real-time viewing of CommunityTV and GovernmentTV online, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Visitors can also search the archives for past video presentations and watch them online through a video-on-demand streaming service.

Website hits (i.e., unique sessions) average around 2,685 per month. As can be seen in [Figure 4: Website Visitor Sources](#), the majority of visitors come to the website directly (from, for example, a bookmark in their browser), with a slightly smaller percentage of visitors from search engines (such as Google). This indicates that the website is serving a specific community of users, as would be expected by something as local as CommunityTV and GovernmentTV. Visitors also access the website by referral, which is usually a link from a participating government’s website. The remainder of visitors come in through our social media offerings.

In the past year, the TACM.tv website received a total of 32,380 visits from 16,279 unique visitors as seen on [Figure 5: Website Sessions July 2019 to June 2020](#). Visitors to the website view an average of around 2.6 pages each, meaning once they get to the website, they are engaged to view pages beyond the one they originally sought.

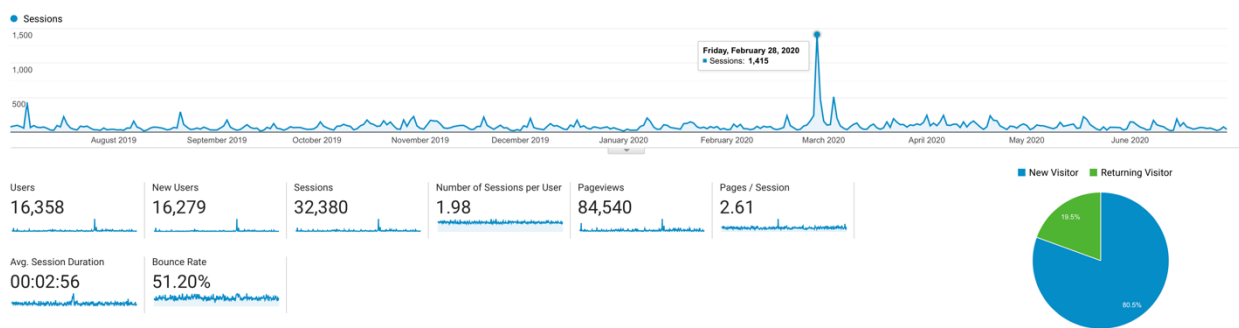
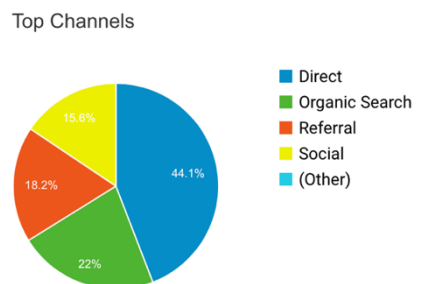


Figure 5: Website Sessions July 2019 to June 2020

The TACM website received 84,540 pageviews for this reporting year. (see [Figure 6: Website Top 10 Pages July 2019 to June 2020](#)). Out of all the pages on TACM.tv, municipal pages received some of the highest percentages of views. The GovernmentTV concurrent stream page (allowing viewers to watch the cable channel online) had



9,260 views, a 55% increase over the previous year. Grand Traverse County’s page continues to be the most viewed for on-demand video at 2,964 pageviews.

Page	Pageviews	% Pageviews
1. /govtvnow.asp	9,260	10.95%
2. /default.asp	8,189	9.69%
3. /govtmeetings.asp	6,294	7.44%
4. /govtv_gtcounty.asp	2,964	3.51%
5. /govtv_cityoftc.asp	2,309	2.73%
6. /communitytvnow.asp	2,256	2.67%
7. /communitytvshed.asp	2,220	2.63%
8. /communitytvshows.asp	1,890	2.24%
9. /strings.asp	1,721	2.04%
10. /browsemmeetings.asp	1,567	1.85%

Figure 6: Website Top 10 Pages July 2019 to June 2020

Traverse Area Community Media provides simultaneous web streaming of both CommunityTV Channel 189 and GovernmentTV Channel 191. This live TV streaming involves a special set of computers and requires a substantial amount of the internet bandwidth to be purchased by Traverse Area Community Media. However, this internet stream ensures that people who do not have Charter Cable TV can still watch the public-access and government-access stations.

Internet users viewed the CommunityTV stream 2,256 times during the last year, with the highest traffic occurring for the National Cherry Festival’s Cherry Royale Parade on July 6, 2019 (see [Figure 7: CommunityTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2019 to June 2020](#)).

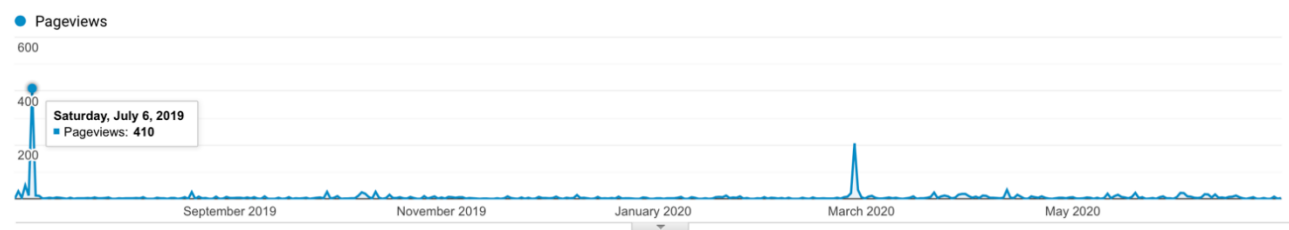


Figure 7: CommunityTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2019 to June 2020

The GovernmentTV stream was viewed 9,260 times during the last year, with the highest volume being 332 on August 21, 2019 (see [Figure 8: GovernmentTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2019 to June 2020](#)).

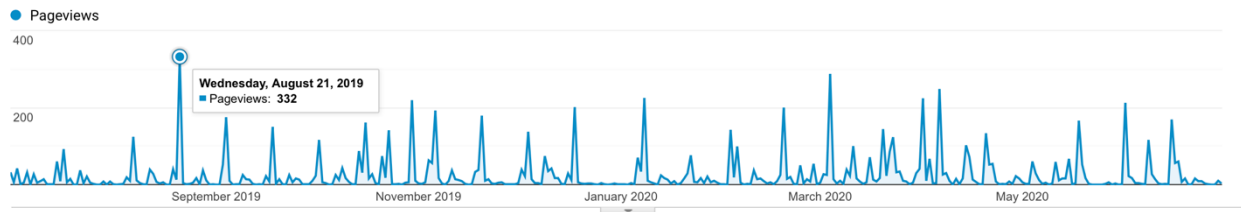


Figure 8: GovernmentTV Concurrent Stream Viewers July 2019 to June 2020

Facebook – We continue to use social media as a complement to the website to increase community outreach. Traverse Area Community Media’s Facebook page helps to engage the community in discussion about events and programs on CommunityTV and GovernmentTV.

YouTube Channel – This channel provides an alternate place for people to find CommunityTV shows created by Traverse Area Community Media, driving a different demographic back to our website. This past year views of programs on the CommunityTV YouTube Channel increased by 125%, from roughly 125,500 to 283,300 (see [Figure 9: YouTube Viewer Metrics July 2019 to June 2020](#)).

A total of 89,700 hours of programming (179% increase) have been viewed on our YouTube page in the last year, with an average viewing time of 19 minutes — a relatively long duration for YouTube channels, and a 24% increase over the previous reporting year.

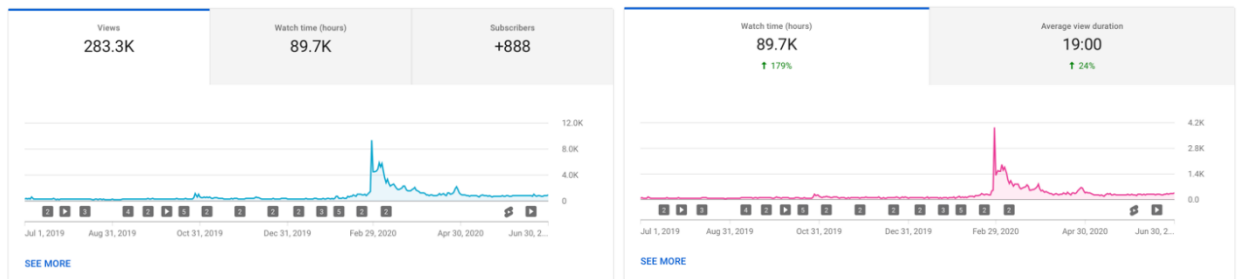


Figure 9: YouTube Viewer Metrics July 2019 to June 2020

Special Projects of Traverse Area Community Media

To provide citizens and participating local governments of the Grand Traverse region the best public- and government-access TV services, Traverse Area Community Media continued to expand the number of special volunteer productions this year. These projects help provide



coverage of key community events, deliver learning opportunities for volunteer producers, celebrate community culture and heritage, and help to assure easy access to video records of community events. One of our goals, outlined in our last annual report, was to increase the number of live volunteer productions. We are happy to report that we were able to increase this number

from six live productions in 2018-19 to 27 in 2019-20. Here are a few examples of the partnerships and projects Traverse Area Community Media has worked on this past year:



Cherry Festival Parades – In July 2019, Traverse Area

Community Media continued the precedent set in 2018 by providing live broadcasts of all three National Cherry Festival Parades. Media center staff and volunteers braved the crowds to run cameras and cables, bringing the parade to people who aren't able to attend. The broadcast can be seen on CommunityTV and Facebook Live.



National Writers Series – Traverse Area

Community Media volunteers and staff record this nationally-recognized program of discussions with popular authors. Held at the City Opera House, this event provides a great training opportunity for volunteer camera operators and production assistants.

Newton's Road STEM Careers – In May

2020, we began working closely with Newton's Road to produce weekly STEM programming for K-12 students. The aim of this programming was to provide additional educational resources to students doing virtual learning. All programs were broadcasted live on Facebook and CommunityTV 189.



Traverse City Film Festival – Traverse Area Community Media records the daily filmmaker panel discussions of the festival and prepares them for cablecast. Traverse Area Community Media staff and volunteers set up a multi-camera production system at the City Opera House, record the discussions, and breaks it all back down before the next film is shown. Traverse Area Community Media staff then put the finishing touches on the video at the office, and the panel discussion airs on CommunityTV and Facebook.



Public Meetings and Events – Traverse Area Community Media recorded a wide variety of public meetings and events partnering with organizations such as the Inland Seas Education Association, Traverse City Downtown Development Authority, Northwestern Michigan College Children’s Choir, League of Women Voters Grand Traverse Area, the Groundwork Center for Resilient Communities, FLOW, Traverse City Historical Society, League of

Women Voters Leelanau County, Disability Network, GT Metro, Traverse Area District Library, Newton’s Road, Traverse Symphony Orchestra, Hear:Say Storytellers, and Building Bridges with Music.

NMC Children’s Choir – Traverse Area Community Media has continued the tradition of recording NMC Choirs in concert. Year after year, these recordings prove to be some of our most popular programs for DVD sales. Family members that are unable to attend the live performances regularly contact the media center for copies of the program. This year, we also offered a live broadcasting option for the first time. These two live broadcasts received over 3,000 views, dozens of shares, and a lot of positive community feedback.



Funding and Expenses of the Community Media Center

LIAA’s Traverse Area Community Media is in its 12th year of operation under contracts with the City of Traverse City and East Bay, Elmwood and Garfield Charter Townships. Under these contracts, LIAA provides Public-Access and Government-Access TV services, including education, technical assistance, equipment specification and management, scheduling and

transcoding, video access on the Internet, and cablecasting. As stated in each contract, the primary purpose of this effort is:

“. . . to provide a forum for resident citizens, community service groups, nonprofit organizations, and other non-commercial groups to present their views and to celebrate local achievement, provide community education, encourage civic engagement, present local culture and art appreciation, and support individual expression.”

The most important source of funding for public-access and government-access TV are franchise fees collected from Charter Communications by the local governments in exchange for the use of public property (right-of-ways). The fees are usually reflected on each cable subscriber’s monthly bill.

The franchise agreements between Charter Communications and the municipalities that participate in Traverse Area Community Media were renegotiated in 2017. As a result, the contract between LIAA and the participating municipalities was updated as well. The jurisdictions now provide support for PEG access through the dedication of thirty percent (30%) of their franchise fees to defray operation costs for the Media Center, and thirty percent (30%) of PEG fees to defray capital costs (i.e., new equipment and maintenance). The PEG fee formula was substantially reduced from the original contract with LIAA, as the equipment needs of the Media Center have stabilized over time (i.e., moving from a “startup” to a mature operation). This means more of the equipment fees paid by Charter will remain in the hands of each participating municipality for their own equipment needs.

Our community’s public-access and government-access TV systems operated by LIAA are financially viable under the new contracts with the City of Traverse City and the Charter Townships of East Bay, Elmwood, and Garfield. To provide greater flexibility, we have worked to enhance public-access TV funding through participation fees and fee-for-service work. In the coming year, we hope to continue building external funding by developing more underwriting and sponsorship opportunities.

Over the past 12 years, LIAA has kept costs at or below the funding levels provided. However, with the participation of additional municipalities, the entire PEG TV communications system would be stronger and more valuable to the community as a whole. We continue to work to recruit additional municipalities to take advantage of this powerful community resource.