

Media/Public Safety Co-op

Meeting minutes

07-11-03

Members Present:

Shelly Alley, Roanoke Police
Sheriff George McMillan, Roanoke Sheriff's Office
Sheriff Gerald Holt, Roanoke County Sheriff's Office
Meg Hibbert, Salem Times Register
Catherine Cronin, US Forest Service
JoBeth Brown, US Forest Service
Ray Clark, Salem PD
Mike Stater, VA Department of Health
Tom Kincaid, Roanoke County Police
Scott Meadows, Roanoke City Schools
Jennifer Faulkner, Roanoke Fire-EMS
Erin Barnhart, Roanoke Sheriff's Office
Melissa Martin, WSLS
Melissa Preas, WSLS
Lindsey Nair, Roanoke Times
Rick Mattioni, WVTF

This meeting was hosted by WVTF Radio in their new studio off Franklin Road in Roanoke. News director/Program director Rick Mattioni offered an introduction and tour.

Intro:

WVTF public radio is in it's 30th year and is one of the oldest public radio stations in the state of Virginia and the largest.

Employing 28 to 30 part-time and full-time, WVTF has 150,000 listeners. It is owned by the Virginia Tech Foundation and has the largest radio newsroom in the state.

The new headquarters is a \$3 million facility that is all digital and almost four times the size of the old studio. It has several soundproof studios that will be used in the future for public debates and other things.

The transition from old station to new was smooth. Some old equipment has been sold, some given away.

WVTF is currently acquiring some new stations in far Southwest Virginia.

Fifty-five to 65% of the station's funding comes from listeners. The second biggest chunk comes from underwriters and the rest comes from grants and such.

The operating budget is \$2.1 million, more than \$700,000 of which goes toward news.

"News is a huge, huge element of our programming," Mattioni said.

70% of the weekly audience tunes in for news.

WVTF also operates Radio IQ, which is all news all the time and Radio Reading Services, which serves 3,000-5,000 visually impaired listeners and is sponsored by contributions and grants.

The focus of news and information is different at WVTF than other radio and television. Their focus group is 35-55 year-olds who are fairly well-educated and well-off. That group is interested in more politics, issues, public affairs, etc. There is a great concentration on both morning and afternoon news at WVTF.

Business matters:

-Sgt. Tom Foster has been named the new public information officer for the Virginia State Police. He is currently in training but will take over officially beginning Monday the 14th. Looking forward to meeting him next time.

-Welcome to new Roanoke City Sheriff's Department spokesperson Erin Barnhart.

-Some concerns expressed over use of the paging system (or lack thereof). We decided as a group that the real concern is consistency in use. For example, the homicide in Roanoke County on Tuesday did not go out over the pager. Sgt. Kincaid pointed out that it appeared as if all interested media were already on scene, but in the future that might not be the case. Also, for updates later in the day the pager would be useful. It is the principal of the thing that matters- the paging group was established with consistent use in particular situations in mind. A homicide should always go out, some agreed. Use of the pager ought to make everyone's job easier.

Kincaid said he will report back to the department with this concern. Shelly handed out additional instruction cards to several attendees with information on how to send a page.

-Sgt. Kincaid reported on the county's new HIPAA policy. They will release the names of people, but not their injuries. If they release injuries, they will not release the names.

There was some discussion about HIPAA and continuing problems with consistent interpretation of the law. Shelly Alley said the city police will continue to release names and injuries.

Sheriff Gerald Holt (Roanoke County) pointed out that everyone is gun shy about HIPAA and no one wants to be the first one sued. Everyone hopes that continued discussion and some eventual case law will make HIPAA and its affect on all of us easier to understand.

Next meeting tentatively scheduled for Sept. 18 at the Roanoke City Health Department. Spokesman Mike Stater would like to take that opportunity to discuss a statewide bioterrorism drill that will take place in October. Be there or be unaware.

Until next time,

Lindsey Nair, Co-Chair
Shelly Alley, Co-Chair