



Greater Northshire Access Television Policies and Procedures

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I. Introduction

A. Purpose of GNAT-TV

Greater Northshire Access Television, Inc. (GNAT-TV) is a volunteer not-for-profit Vermont corporation formed to facilitate, encourage, and promote community involvement in volunteer-produced non-commercial television and to oversee and ensure the contractual and regulatory commitments to public, educational and governmental access of the cable communication system provider for the towns which carry GNAT-TV as one of its access channels. The corporation shall be committed to promoting access to communications media in communities served by GNAT-TV.

GNAT-TV operates three PEG channels: Channel 15 is for public access, Channel 16 carries education programs and channel 17 is for governmental programming. GNAT-TV is also the Access Management Organization (AMO) for the Towns of Londonderry and Weston *dba* Mountain Communities Television. GNAT-TV is funded primarily by a percentage of the cable subscription fees paid to cable companies by subscribers in our viewing area.

B. Purpose of this document

The Policies and Procedures stated below are designed to ensure that GNAT-TV's resources are used only for intended purposes and that all who wish to participate have an opportunity to do so on a fair and non-discriminatory basis.

C Role of GNAT-TV Staff

The primary role of GNAT-TV staff is to train community producers, maintain equipment and facilities, schedule programming and equipment, and bring community members together in an environment that will foster the best use of public, educational and governmental (PEG) access television.

GNAT-TV is staffed by an executive director, station manager, educational access coordinator, and a tech/access assistant. The staff is supported by volunteers and interns.

GNAT-TV is governed by a board of directors which meets quarterly and whose meetings are open to the public.

D. Definitions

The following definitions apply throughout this document:

1. "GNAT-TV" refers to Greater Northshire Access Television
2. "GNAT-TV viewing area" refers to any municipality served by Comcast which carries GNAT-TV.
3. "Volunteer Producer" refers to anyone who uses GNAT-TV facilities who is not staff.
4. "GNAT-TV staff" refers to the Executive Director or any staff member under the direction of the Executive Director.

II. Membership

A. Access to Facilities:

1. Non-discrimination: No individual or group will be denied access to GNAT-TV facilities or equipment on the basis of race, sex, age, disability, religious or political beliefs, or sexual orientation.
2. Any member of the public, regardless of residency, may:
 - a. Submit a Public Service Announcement for the Community Bulletin Board, in accordance with GNAT-TV's requirements.
 - b. Participate in those GNAT-TV events which are open to the public.
 - c. Be a guest in the Studio and Edit Room under the supervision of a Certified Community Producer or GNAT-TV staff member.
3. Any member of the public residing in the GNAT-TV viewing area is eligible to make use of the following services in addition to those listed above:
 - a. Submit a complaint about transmission quality, programming content or scheduling.

B. GNAT-TV Membership

Presently GNAT-TV does not have a formal membership policy. Anyone who lives or works in the franchise area or who belongs to an agency or non-profit organization that serves the franchise is eligible to use GNAT-TV's facility.

In addition they may run for election to the GNAT-TV Board of Directors, if 18 years or older. Non-cable subscribers must register to vote.

Volunteers may also:

- a. Attend video production trainings and workshops in order to use GNAT-TV equipment and facilities.
- b. Sponsor programming for cablecast in accordance with Program Content Rules.
- c. Receive notice of production and crew opportunities.

III. GNAT-TV Code of Conduct; Violations and Consequences

A. GNAT-TV Code of Conduct

1. The GNAT-TV Code of Conduct applies to anyone entering GNAT-TV facilities for any reason. Individuals found in violation of GNAT-TV's Code of Conduct shall be subject to disciplinary action as outlined below in Section III B.
2. The purpose of GNAT-TV's Code of Conduct is to uphold the following standards:

- a. Prohibit criminal behavior;
 - b. Respect the rights and property of others;
 - c. Provide for personal health and safety; and
 - d. Protect GNAT-TV's equipment and facility from abuse and damage.
3. The following behaviors or actions are prohibited:
- a. Smoking on the premises.
 - b. Eating or drinking in the Edit Room and Control Room. Eating or drinking in the Studio may be authorized by GNAT-TV staff for special events.
 - c. Language that disparages others because of race, religion, origin, gender age, lifestyle, sexual orientation, or disabilities.
 - d. Loitering.
 - e. Rearranging or reconfiguring of GNAT-TV equipment without staff approval.
 - f. Using another's property, time or workspace without expressed permission.
 - g. Being under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
 - h. Abuse or willful damage of GNAT-TV equipment and property. Proper respect and care for the equipment must be maintained at all times.
 - i. Abusive, threatening, disruptive or violent behavior, or direct harassment or intimidation of personnel, volunteers and/or guests.
 - j. Possession or use of any illegal substance or weapon in or on GNAT-TV premises is strictly forbidden.
 - k. Any action or behavior that adversely affects the safety of others or security of GNAT-TV.
 - l. Neglect of GNAT-TV Policies and Procedures, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Falsifying forms;
 - 2) Taking or reserving equipment without staff permission;
 - 3) Use of equipment or facilities for unauthorized profit-making, personal, or solely recreational use;
 - 4) Late pick-up or return of equipment without notification and approval;
 - 5) Failure to clean up after use of facilities.
4. Qualifications
- a. GNAT-TV reserves the right to require that children under the age of 12 must be supervised by and remain in the company of their parent or guardian while on GNAT-TV premises.
 - b. Personal property shall not be the responsibility of GNAT-TV.
 - c. If any behavior is in violation of public laws, any such violations will be reported to the proper authorities.

B. Violations and Consequences

1. Violations of GNAT-TV Policies and Procedures shall result in Consequences as outlined below. Violations of GNAT-TV Program Content Rules (Section XV) may result in suspension from channel use. Violations of Code of Conduct (Section IIIA) may result in suspension from GNAT-TV facilities. If a violation results in suspension from the facilities only, that volunteer retains access to channel use and may submit programs through a proxy. Similarly, if a violation results in suspension from channel use only, that volunteer retains access to the facilities.

2. Consequences of Violations

a. First offense

A first violation of GNAT-TV Policies and Procedures shall result in the following consequences. GNAT-TV staff shall:

- 1) Advise that the behavior or action is in violation of GNAT-TV's Policies and Procedures.
- 2) Direct that the inappropriate behavior or action be discontinued or corrected immediately.
- 3) Warn that additional violations shall result in suspension of privileges.
- 4) If the behavior or action ceases, no further staff action will be necessary. If the behavior or action continues, the person may be asked to leave the GNAT-TV premises and a written warning will be issued.

b. Second offense

- 1) A second violation of GNAT-TV's Policies and Procedures shall result in a 30-day suspension; either from channel use or facilities use, or both if the violation is of a severity to warrant complete suspension of GNAT-TV privileges.
- 2) Notice of the suspension shall be issued in writing by the Executive Director. Suspension will become effective immediately as of the date of the violation.

c. Third offense

- 1) A third violation of GNAT-TV's Policies and Procedures shall result in a suspension of at least 90 days and up to one year, either from channel use or facilities use, or both if the violation is of a severity to warrant complete suspension of GNAT-TV privileges. The length of the suspension shall be determined by the Executive Director according to the severity of the violation.

d. Exceptions

Some violations are more serious than others and may result in immediate suspension of access to facilities and/or channel use.

e. Appeal of Disciplinary Action

- 1) A member may appeal any warning or suspension by submitting a written statement to the Executive Director. All appeals must be submitted within 10 calendar days of the date of the disciplinary action. The disciplinary action will remain in effect throughout the appeals process. The Executive Director will investigate the circumstances surrounding the disciplinary action and return to the member a written decision within 14 calendar days from receipt of the written statement by the member.
- 2) A suspended member may appeal the Executive Director's decision to the Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors by filing a notice of appeal to the Executive Director within 30 days of receipt of the Executive Director's decision. The disciplinary action will remain in effect throughout the appeals process. The Personnel Committee of the Board of Directors shall hold a hearing on the appeal within 30 days of the filing of the notice of appeal and shall render its decision immediately following the hearing.

IV. Access to Facilities and Equipment

- A. Production equipment and facilities are available at *no charge* to community volunteers, provided that:
 1. GNAT-TV production equipment and facilities are not used as an income-generating source, but rather as a forum for community communication.
 2. Programs are being prepared for cablecast on GNAT-TV channels.
 3. All persons operating the equipment are qualified to use the equipment.
 4. The community producer has filled out a GNAT-TV *Program Proposal* form and a *Production Data* form when the program is completed.
 5. Equipment use must be scheduled by the staff.
- B. Use of production equipment and studio facilities is scheduled on a first-come, first serve, non-discriminatory basis. However, no one individual or group may monopolize equipment.
- C. GNAT-TV's community bulletin board is to be used for non-profit and community groups to publicize activities and events in the GNAT-TV viewing area.
- D. All users of the "Tank McBride Community Kitchen" must tag the Community Kitchen credits on the end of their program.

V. Rights and Obligations

- A. All programs must adhere to copyright regulations.
- B. Anyone producing a program using GNAT-TV equipment retains ownership of the copyright to that program, as well as responsibility for any copyright disputes that might arise. GNAT-TV reserves the right to replay the program in perpetuity and to use clips or stills from the program for publicity purposes.

- C. The producer or sponsor must secure all releases of copyright, talent, and location, etc.
- D. Producers who are not paid by GNAT-TV must identify themselves only as public access community producers, not as staff or employees of GNAT-TV, or as in any way representing GNAT-TV.
- E. If subsequent use of any material produced with GNAT-TV equipment generates income, including the sale of duplicated tapes, GNAT-TV is entitled to 15% of that income.

VI. Training

- A. GNAT-TV offers workshops in basic video production, multi-camera remote production, studio production and editing, as well as training in other related topics.
- B. Persons wishing to register for workshops or courses must fill out a registration form. Waiting lists are maintained to insure that trainees are admitted to workshops and other educational programs on first-come, first-served, non-discriminatory basis.

VII. Cablecasting Standards & Procedures

- A. GNAT-TV primarily accepts the following media formats:
 - 1. DVD-R
 - 2. S-VHS
 - 3. VHS (recorded in SP speed only)
- B. GNAT-TV will not run any program that has poor technical quality.
- C. GNAT-TV provides videotape for all productions. If volunteers wish to retain any original footage they need to purchase the tapes.
- D. Copies of finished programs

Community producers are entitled to make one copy of their finished program, offered at cost of the blank media. For additional copies, producers will pay the current GNAT-TV rate for duplication. If any of the producer's copies are sold, the producer must adhere to income guidelines as per rule XIII.A.

GNAT-TV may keep a copy of the program for the archives.
- E. Requests for Cablecast:
 - 1. A *Request for Cablecast* form must be filled out and signed prior to the program's being cablecast.
 - 2. Completed tapes/DVDs must be submitted to a GNAT-TV staff member for cataloging and scheduling by Wednesday 12 p.m. in order to be scheduled for cablecast the following week.

3. All requests for channel time on GNAT-TV will be processed on a fair and equitable basis. The *cablecast form* will be used for scheduling the program.
4. Scheduled programs may be preempted for time-sensitive programs.
5. GNAT-TV will prioritize the programming received thusly
 - A. Produced in the Northshire, Weston or Londonderry
 - B. Produced in Bennington County
 - C. Produced in Vermont
 - D. Produced elsewhere.
6. Programs produced outside GNAT-TV may be cablecast if they meet the technical standards outlined below and legal standards specified in the Statement of Compliance on the *Request for Cablecast Form*. These programs must be sponsored and submitted by a volunteer who meets one of the requirements in section **IIB**.

F. Series:

1. Regularly scheduled series time slots will be allocated at the discretion of the Program Coordinator, provided ample time remains available for other community programming requests. Programs produced at GNAT-TV will be given precedence in scheduling.
2. A series will be allocated a maximum of one year of play, after which reapplication will be required. Reapplication will be considered in the light of other scheduling demands.
3. If a series producer regularly fails to have his or her program ready for scheduled cablecast, the time slot may be reassigned to other users.

G. Technical Standards:

GNAT-TV reserves the right to reject any program that does not meet minimum technical standards outlined below. While locally produced programs are not expected to look like they were produced for a commercial television network, tapes/DVDs which do not carry a stable signal over the cable system or which might damage GNAT-TV equipment will not be cablecast.

1. Videotape Standards

All finished tapes must meet the following minimum standards:

- a. Begin and end with at least 10 seconds of black.
- b. Any program displaying a lack of video signal (i.e. "snow") will not be cablecast.
- c. Any tape recorded in LP or EP format cannot be cablecast.
- d. Audio levels must be adequate.

- e. Finished tapes must be labeled as follows on the tape spine:
 - 1. The complete program title.
 - 2. The date of the event or production in MM/DD/YY format.
 - 3. Total running time in HH:MM:SS format.
 - 4. Cue time (place on the tape where the program begins)
 - 5. Indication by date or number the sequence of the programs if more than one on a tape or more than one program in a series.
 - 6. Producer's name.

2. DVD Standards:

Submitted DVDs must meet the following minimum standards:

- a. Each DVD track/title to be cablecast must contain a minimum 3-second fade-in or fade-out to black at the beginning and end of the program.
- b. DVDs submitted with scratches and/or fingerprints cannot be cablecast.
- c. A DVD that does not play successfully in GNAT-TV's DVD decks after two attempts cannot be cablecast. The Program Coordinator will request a resubmittal of the program from the producer.
- d. Any program displaying a "skip" or lack of signal ("snow") cannot be cablecast.
- e. Audio levels must be adequate.
- f. Programs submitted on a multi-title/track DVD must display the appropriate track/title number on the DVD label or the Cablecast Request Form.
- g. DVDs must be labeled as follows:
 - 1. Complete program title.
 - 2. Date of event or production in MM/DD/YY format.
 - 3. Run time of program to be aired, in HH:MM:SS format.
 - 4. Title/track number of program to be aired, if applicable.
 - 5. Producer's name.
 - 6. DVDs with adhesive labels not designed for DVD use cannot be accepted.

H. Program retention and return

- 1. The submitted program or a copy will be kept at GNAT-TV for at least four weeks for cablecast. GNAT-TV reserves the right to show a program as many times as there is interest in the community.
- 2. GNAT-TV may request permission from the producer for the following:
 - a. Duplication of program for distribution.

- b. Distribution of program to other cable access stations.
 - c. Duplication of program for GNAT-TV archives.
- 3. When the Request for Cablecast form is submitted, producers have the following options regarding the return or disposition of their program once it has been cablecast:
 - a. Pick up the program at the GNAT-TV office within 60 days. If this option is indicated, GNAT-TV will notify the producer when the program is available for pickup. It is the producer's responsibility to pick up the program within 60 days of notification. Any program left at GNAT-TV for longer than 60 days becomes the property of GNAT-TV; after this period of time, GNAT-TV retains the right to dispose of or recycle it.
 - b. Ask GNAT-TV to return the program by mail. If so, a self-addressed stamped envelope must be provided.
 - c. Allow GNAT-TV to dispose of the program.

VIII. Equipment Use – General

- A. Access users under the age of 18 must have a signed consent form from a parent of guardian. Minors must also have adult supervision or approval from the executive director or access coordinator for taking equipment on their own.
- B. Care of equipment and facilities:
 - 1. Individuals using GNAT-TV equipment and facilities will not tamper or change any wiring or components. No attempt should be made to repair or work on equipment.
 - 2. Any damage costs caused by unauthorized tampering will be charged to the user. These costs include any attorney fees, replacement fees or court costs related to the damage done *by* the user. Loss of equipment and facilities privileges will result from such abuse.
 - 3. All equipment defects, damages and problems must be reported to GNAT-TV staff upon check-in.
 - 4. No food, drink, or smoking is allowed near equipment at any time, either on GNAT-TV premises or in the field.
 - 5. Equipment must not be kept in a car over night or in the sun for long periods of time.
 - 6. Facilities must be left in a clean and neat condition:
 - a. Any props, tapes, scripts, etc. should be removed at the end of the session.
 - b. Cables should be wrapped appropriately and portable equipment replaced
 - c. Power should be turned off.

IX. Field Equipment: Checkout & Check-In

- A. All equipment must be checked out and in by a GNAT-TV staff person or someone designated by the Executive Director.
- B. An equipment checkout form must be filled out, signed and dated by the user.
- C. It is suggested that community producers set up and test equipment before removing it from GNAT-TV. Failure to do so will be the community producer's responsibility and the return of damaged or broken equipment will be the responsibility of that person.
- D. Community producers must report any problems or breakage when returning equipment.
- E. Community producers are responsible for loss or damage due to negligence or abuse while the equipment is checked out to them. All fees in connection with repair or replacement must be paid in full or a payment schedule agreed upon with the executive director before any further equipment use will be allowed.
- F. Equipment should be reserved as early as possible, using the appropriate sign-up system.
- G. Out of consideration for others, community producers are expected to notify GNAT-TV staff in a timely way if they will be late dropping off equipment or to use the edit suite.

X. Studio Use

- A. To use the studio and control room, the community producer must have sufficient crew and proven technical ability.
- B. A minimum of two weeks notification for scheduling of the studio is required.
- C. Live studio production requires supervision by GNAT-TV staff. Live studio production may include video streaming if technically feasible.
- D. Studio productions scheduled for outside regular GNAT-TV hours must be arranged with GNAT-TV staff.
- E. Community producers are responsible for the behavior and actions of their guests, talent and others in attendance.

XI. Editing and Post-Production

- A. In order to schedule edit time, a community producer must have demonstrated the ability to use the editing software or be trained by a GNAT-TV staff member.
- B. Cancellations of edit time should be made 24 hours in advance of scheduled time.
- C. Editing times are scheduled for regular station business hours. Other times may be allowed at the discretion of the GNAT-TV staff.

- D. If a community producer will require staff assistance during the edit session, this should also be scheduled when time is booked.
- E. If any piece of equipment needs to be reconfigured, a staff member must be notified.

XII. No-Shows on Scheduled Equipment Time

- A. Cancellation of equipment and facility reservations should be made 24 hours in advance, except in cases of emergency.
- B. If a producer does not show up within 1 hour of the time of a reservation for equipment or facilities, the reserved equipment or facilities may be used by any waiting individual, affectionately known as a Video Vulture.

XIII. Underwriting, Grants and Profit-making

- A. If footage produced or edited with GNAT-TV equipment is at any time sold or rented GNAT-TV is entitled to a percentage of all monies received *to be determined by the producer and GNAT-TV*.
- B. If footage produced with GNAT-TV equipment is used by a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for *fundraising*, GNAT-TV shall be entitled to a percentage of all monies received *to be determined by the non-profit organization and GNAT-TV*
- C. GNAT-TV reserves the right to seek and/or approve underwriting/sponsorship/grants, and collect funds or in-kind contributions, for any programming produced with GNAT-TV equipment.

Any acknowledgement of underwriters/sponsors/grantors must be prepared or approved by the executive director. The program may thank underwriters through sponsorship acknowledgements with spoken and written words as well as with graphics, either at the beginning or end of a program. Acknowledgements may include factual information about a company or business, but must be noncommercial.

- D. An administrative fee of 10% will be charged by GNAT-TV for any grant written under GNAT-TV's 501(c)(3).
- E. Credit for underwriting should be as follows: "This program was made possible by a grant from..." or "Goods and services used in this program were contributed by..." or as otherwise specified by the grantor in accordance with GNAT-TV's 501(c)(3) status.
 - 1. GNAT-TV credit must still be included, i.e. "This program was produced at Greater Northshire Access Television, Manchester, Vermont."
- F. Voluntary participation is strongly encouraged by GNAT-TV. Payment of crew by a producer for any program must be reported to the executive director.

XIV. Program Content Rules

- A. Presentation of the following material on the community access channel is prohibited:
1. Any material that is commercial in nature, including:
 - a. Qualitative or comparative claims
 - b. Direct inducements or calls to action
 - c. Overly promotional material
 2. Any material which is intended to defraud the viewer.
 3. Any program that promotes or conducts a lottery, raffle, contest or game involving prizes awarded wholly or in part by lottery or chance.
 4. Any material that is libelous or slanderous, or material that is an unlawful invasion of privacy.
 5. Any material that violates state or federal law relating to obscenity.
 6. GNAT-TV requests that any program which contains violent material, adult language, nudity, or sexually explicit material carry a disclaimer at the beginning of the program to read: "This program contains material which may not be suitable for all viewers. Parental discretion advised".
 7. GNAT-TV requires that the producer/submitter of programs which contain excessively violent material, excessive adult language, nudity or sexually explicit material agree to have their programs cable cast after 11 p.m.
- B. Regarding political programming, GNAT-TV encourages community producers to produce:
1. Political presentations which are informative in nature, showing who a candidate is and what he or she represents in terms of specific ideas, issues and policies.
 2. Candidates forums
 3. GNAT-TV itself will not produce any partisan programming, but will assist community producers in providing non-partisan forums to the public.
 - a. Because of GNAT-TV scheduling requirements, any bicycled or locally produced political program must be handed in to GNAT-TV staff 13 days before the election in order to be shown for the full week before the election, on the Monday before election day and on election day. Programs handed in after that can only be assured of being shown the Monday before election day and on election day.
 - b. GNAT-TV co-sponsored, co-produced forums must be planned at least one month before the election, and taped at least 15 days before the election in order to be shown for the full week prior to the election, on the Monday before election day and on election day.

XV. Program Promotion

- A. All community producers are encouraged to promote their own programs.
- B. Effective promotional techniques include short news releases written by the community producer and submitted to GNAT-TV on disk or via email, which we can email with our cablecast schedule to area newspapers and radio stations and list on the GNAT-TV bulletin board. Short (30 second) video promotions may also be produced and shown on the bulletin board at the discretion of GNAT-TV.
- C. For special promotion of time-sensitive programs or other major projects, please speak with the executive director.

XVI. Grievance Procedure

For any grievance that cannot be satisfied by appeal to the Executive Director, the following procedure shall be followed:

- A. Upon receipt of a written complaint, the Executive Director shall:
 - 1. Notify the complainant of the receipt of complaint.
 - 2. Forward the complaint to the GNAT-TV Board of Directors for review at the next regular board meeting. The board shall determine at that meeting whether to accept the Executive Director's action as the end of the matter, or to review the matter further by scheduling a hearing.
 - 3. If the board desires a hearing, it shall set a date for a hearing to occur within 60 days of the board meeting. The Executive Director shall mail a copy of the complaint and a notification of the hearing date to all concerned parties. The concerned parties shall be notified of their right to attend this hearing to speak to the matter.
- B. Upon conclusion of the hearing, the board may take any of the following actions to resolve the matter:
 - 1. Suspension, either from GNAT-TV channel use or access to facilities or both, for a period of 30 days to one year, depending on the severity of the action;
 - 2. Other action appropriate to the conclusions reached by the board and within its discretion and authority;
 - 3. Referral to the appropriate authorities if the matter is shown to be outside the purview of the GNAT-TV board.
 - 4. The board decision shall be final.

XVII. Amendments

GNAT-TV's Board of Directors reserves the right to amend these GNAT-TV Policies and Procedures at any board meeting where a quorum is present.