

# Siskiyou Media Council

## 2010 Board of Directors Retreat Report

*Submitted April 28, 2010*

*by*

*Deborra Brannon, Retreat Facilitator*

Facilitator's comments (Deborra Brannon) .....	2
Roundtable introductions: "What strengths do you bring to the organization?" .....	3
Brainstorming a new Vision Statement .....	4
Discussion: Agenda item #1: Prioritize current, ongoing Organizational activities/programs (Audra Gibson) .....	5
Discussion: Agenda item #2: Address SMC staffing need (Barbara Dillmann) .....	6
Discussion: Overview of potential executive staffing redesign (Audra Gibson) .....	7
Discussion: Agenda item #4 and #5: Encourage and facilitate programming created by and for the local high schools (Nathan Johnston) <i>and</i> Carry out a successful youth media project (Mark Stensaas) .....	8
"Extras:" Timeline and "Elephant" List .....	10
Appendix: Retreat Agenda, Desired Outcomes, Discussion Guidelines, Meeting Outline .....	11

April 28, 2010

Greetings to you all!

It was a pleasure and a privilege to facilitate your board retreat on April 10<sup>th</sup>. I came away from the afternoon with a deeper understanding of the ongoing work in which Siskiyou Media Council is engaged, a clear sense of the board's dedication to the community, and a keen respect for the effort involved in directing, staffing, and growing this organization.

I appreciated tremendously the professional, courteous, and open manner with which the group kept ideas flowing. For the most part, you made my job easy – little in your spontaneous discussions called for redirection or intervention of any kind. You worked efficiently, participated equally to a large extent, and covered a lot of ground in five hours. Congratulations!

I also appreciated your allowing the unscheduled presentation and discussion of the executive staff proposal Audra and I had been working on for several months. It was an act of generosity to entertain a matter which was, strictly speaking, a departure from the meeting outline. I've found that it's more difficult to recall the details of that discussion for purposes of this report because I was an active participant, but I have done my best. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you are aware of any omission, misrepresentation, or mistake in my recollection.

This report includes all materials handed out at the retreat, transcriptions of all flip-chart material generated during the discussions, and a record of many points raised verbally during the initial roundtable work and subsequent agenda item discussions. With the exception of the section devoted to the group's introduction period at the beginning of the retreat, my narrative notes do not ascribe discussion points to individual retreat participants.

In fact, fulfilling the role of both facilitator and note-taker/recorder was tricky during the retreat and has made the creation of this report something of a challenge; I have had to rely on memory of the discussion to fill in around the edges of my notes. So this report is an overview of the points raised, ideas presented, and commitments made during the afternoon. It is not intended to be the kind of "minutes" that are documented at a regular meeting. If there is a comment or idea you recall being offered during the retreat but do not see referenced herein, or if your memory of a discussion conflicts with my own, please let me know and I will work with you to amend the report as needed.

And that's about it! I hope to see you all and work with you again soon.

Sincerely,  
Deborra Brannon

## Roundtable introductions: “What strengths do you bring the organization?”

The working session of the April 10, 2010 Siskiyou Media Council Board Retreat began as a roundtable series of individual introductions. Executive Director Audra Gibson suggested that each person include a description of the strengths he or she brings to SMC, as well as some general information about background, experience, and interests.

As a new board member, **Mark Stensaas** was “aiming to be educated” at the outset of the retreat. He is interested in enhancing MCTV15 content quality, continuing to build a good SMC infrastructure, and understanding clearly the product/service the organization seeks to deliver. The **strengths** he brings to SMC are grounded in his business development background.

Over his many years of involvement with MCTV15, **Steve Crow** has had the good fortune to become familiar with aspects of production, editing, and general technology associated with work in the studio. But the primary **strength** he brings to SMC is his role as liaison with College of the Siskiyous; he expressed interest in building on the partnership between the two organizations. He also would like to see increased MCTV15 coverage of community events, continued development of the SMC staff as a strong team, and effective utilization of PROPS.

**Nathan Johnston** put his interest in the SMC board quite simply: “This is the right group, at the right time.” His background and training is “at the intersection of art, technology, and education,” which he described as being one of the **strengths** he brings to SMC. He works primarily with young people, loves not only the realm of ideas but also the actual work required to implement them, and wants to focus his work with the board, in part, on standards, quality, and effective use of community resources.

Among the **strengths** that Tech Director **John Cumming** brings to SMC are his “endless enthusiasm and an insatiable desire to bring tech communications into rural communities.” His current interests focus on the technological – the shift to High Definition and the increasing possibilities of communication over the Internet. He notes dwindling SMC income and troubling changes in the cable TV business. He is committed on behalf of SMC to the transition to new technologies, and to the adoption of SMART standards against which new project ideas ought to be measured (SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely).

**Greg Messer** brings **strengths** such as leadership experience and tech/tech management experience to the SMC board. He describes himself as a “decision maker,” and as one who can lead a group to decision; a key component to his effective leadership is his willingness to take risks. He feels it is critical at this juncture to understand who SMC customers are and to change

how SMC delivers its services in order to best meet customer needs. Accessibility is an important issue to him – he wants to “tear the walls down” that keep people from utilizing the organization and its facilities. He also is interested in leveraging donation resources.

One of the **strengths** that **Barbara Dillmann** brings to SMC is “knowing how to make things work” in the financial realm of the organization. Additional strengths are her extensive professional county-wide connections and her extensive knowledge of the Siskiyou County school system. She is interested in how SMC can best deliver its promises with the tech resources at its disposal, and in how to increase appropriate expectation of organization staff.

**Todd Cory**’s knowledge of technology, his background in broadcast, and his extensive “organizational memory,” due to his long association with SMC, are the key **strengths** he brings to the organization. He is concerned that SMC seems currently “idea-rich, and personnel short,” and would like to see an increase in the availability of MCTV15 programming online.

**Audra Gibson** also brings the benefits of longevity in the organization to her work in SMC. Her knowledge of organizational history informs her decisions about “what to keep, what to let go of,” and makes it clear to her what needs to be done to carry the organization through from day to day. After many hours spent training and working in the MCTV15 studio, she is happy to be able to “run the basics of the station.” In addition to these critical **strengths**, she brings to SMC a passion for service, the ability to quickly develop rapport with people, and a willingness to work hard. She also knows “everyone...”, having developed personal and professional networks throughout the county.

## Brainstorming a new Vision Statement

Retreat participants generated a host of ideas when asked to brainstorm about a new SMC Vision Statement. The last time the vision for the organization was articulated was in 2006; the challenge to begin this process again was met with the following outpouring of organization imperatives:

Customers	Technology
Providing	Funding
Leadership	Public access
Volunteers	Distribution
Community/COS Outreach	Education
Context (ACM, etc.)	Enabler/Facilitator
Professional Services	Trained Staff
County-wide	Tech Services
Partnerships	Service Quality
Utilize Facility, Staff, and Equipment	
Emergency & Public Service	

*(Note: We did not include a presentation of the SMC financial picture from Barbara Dillmann.)*

## Discussion: Agenda item #1

### Prioritize current, ongoing organizational activities/programs (Audra Gibson)

Audra reported feeling “overwhelmed” by the requests and suggestions that fly at her from all directions (including the general public) in the course of her work, and said that she needs help in determining, “What’s really needed? Where are the resources?” She told the retreat participants that her weekly meetings with board president Greg Messer are helpful in clarifying action items, but said that she often experiences the operations side of her job as a task of “putting out fires.”

Initial comments included the need for a “fact book” which could explain to the public “who we are and what we need” to help focus what is currently a random series of input and request lists; a question about whether or not the board is micro-managing Audra as E.D.; and the suggestion that Audra may not be able to prioritize effectively due to a lack of staff to whom to delegate.

Audra generated a list of her current duties and areas of responsibilities, which read as follows (jobs which Audra indicated she most enjoys are **bolded**):

#### Ongoing

##### **PEG access orientation**

##### **Board development**

MCTV15 business plan

Financial planning

Business metrics

##### **Open House**

##### **Org. development**

Annual report – written and video

##### **Volunteer Development**

##### **Admin – accounting**

PROPS business plan

EBB policies

##### **MCTV15 volunteer training**

Newsletter

Home base – info/access to it/comm.

##### **Presentations/Outreach**

Partnerships

Build capacity

#### Current

##### **PSA Day (PROPS)**

##### **Community TV show(s) (PROPS)**

1<sup>st</sup> 5 TV program (PROPS)

##### **Siskiyou Golden Fair**

Content Distribution

Grant proposals

Behavioral Health TV (PROPS)

##### **Emergency planning**

Homework live (PROPS)

Telethon

##### **Studio makeover**

Fundraising

The board generally agreed that Audra’s work as inaugural Executive Director, has “come a long way” since she took the position in July 2008 and recognized her participation in and focus on project-specific activities.

The SMC newsletter was discussed in some detail, with questions raised about who is receiving the newsletter and what the impact of its distribution might be in the community. This discussion also included comments about the need for relevant newsletter content, the need for feedback as to the newsletter's distribution and impact, and the need for feedback as to the impact of press releases.

Audra's agenda item was not resolved per se, but was seen to flow relevantly into the next agenda item about staffing needs.

## **Discussion: Agenda item #2: Address SMC staffing needs (Barbara Dillmann)**

### **Flip chart sound bites ...**

- Virtual office – 8 hour day? ... PEG bookings, etc?
- COS presence / interface w/classes-students
- Utilizations of facilities/equipment
- Drop-ins
- Contract vs. employee
- Business office space vs. production space

Barbara opened the discussion by talking about the difficulties associated with having very few staffed “office hours” and suggesting the possibility of a virtual office, which could be staffed via off-site telephone and/or email. It was noted that when the MCTV15 studio is open, there is generally a class or a scheduled television recording in session, making it difficult for visitors to COS, potential volunteers, and potential clients or producers to make appropriate contact with MCTV15 staff. It was agreed that having someone available for these drop-ins is important; however, there was a difference of opinion as to how many people drop-in – or would like to drop-in – every week.

A potential office space provided by COS on-premises was declared a possibility, but was clearly contingent on staffing; the possibility of COS students staffing some office hours was discussed as a potential work study option, particularly if it provided training in, perhaps, one of the business courses of study. It was noted that “what you appreciate and need, you pay for.”

It was generally agreed that the idea of having some kind of office – be it virtual or actual – was an important step for SMC to take, and that “a studio is not an office.”

The link between agenda item #1 and this item led to a discussion of the type of administrative and oversight duties done by John, as Tech Director, and Audra, as Executive Director, in the

course of their work. There arose the idea of hiring an administrative assistant for Audra and re-assigning some of the time-consuming tasks listed below:

**Tasks to be Done / Job duties/Responsibilities** (*duties not wanted \**)

Answer/return phone calls	\$ QB tracking/accounting/bills/invoicing
Studio booking/scheduling PEG	EBB entries (Prog. Director) *
Copying	Board support/packets and meetings
Monitor calendar	Equipment maintenance
Vacuuming *	Streaming video *
Equipment check out	Programming media server
Mail processing *	Newsletter *
Communications	Databases/metrics
Website *	Press releases *

## **Discussion: Overview of potential executive staffing redesign (Audra Gibson)**

Audra told the group that, over the winter, she and I (Deborra Brannon) had been discussing a possible increase in executive staffing that could be relevant to the retreat discussions up to that point. She asked if the participants were agreeable to our talking about our draft proposal. The group agreed to hear our proposal, and Greg agreed to serve as ad hoc facilitator so that I could participate in the discussion.

Audra explained that our draft proposal took shape as we explored over the course of several months the possibility of working together in SMC when I returned to Siskiyou County sometime this year. During her tenure as part-time E.D., Audra had discovered that her skills and attention often had been concentrated in the operations end of her responsibilities; she was excited about the possibility of managing newly emerging PROPS projects; and she was passionate about her work in the MCTV15 studio with equipment and volunteers. My professional interests and skills were concentrated in different areas, such as long-range planning (design and implementation), business development, public relations, and fundraising. We began to think of ourselves as a team.

The draft proposal presented to the retreat participants entailed a division of the duties currently assigned to Audra as Executive Director into the following two executive staff positions:

- **Operations Director**, whose primary responsibilities would be hands-on work in most aspects of the MCTV15 and PROPS entities, SMC administrative support, management of the MCTV15 studio, and volunteer recruitment, coordination, and training; and,

- **Executive Director**, whose primary responsibilities would be overall SMC management and oversight, long-range business planning and development, community outreach, and both direct and grant-based fundraising.

We further proposed that Audra serve as SMC Operations Director, and that I serve as the organization's Executive Director.

Various members of the group expressed positive views about the possibility of my coming on board in this capacity and also about the possibility of expanding the staff in the way Audra and I proposed. It seemed generally agreed that the organization would benefit from the dedicated fundraising, planning, and development elements of the proposal. Money to pay for an additional SMC position, however, was a key concern. Current SMC resources and the poor state of the U.S. economy and its impact on local business was mentioned, as was a concern about paying for a *new* staff position before transforming the existing Tech Director role into a paid position.

It was suggested that COS might be able to partner financially with SMC on other items already budgeted in order to support the creation of this potential new position/salary. There was a discussion of risk-taking – as a fundamental part of doing business and also as being justifiable only if one can afford to lose what is being risked. It was pointed out that although Audra's hiring in 2008 raised similar concerns about her salary, the organization had nearly the same amount of money in the bank now as it had before her contract was finalized.

I told the group that the result of my business outreach and fundraising efforts for the first year would not cover my salary, but that over the course of the second year revenue and funding should significantly offset, if not fully pay for, my salary. When asked to clarify, I explained my assessment that the organization is not currently poised to receive significant grant funding. I predicted it would take about a year to assemble the administrative materials needed for a successful grant application, tune up the website, create a track record of small, successfully executed projects (on budget, on time), increase our name recognition, and build our identity in the county-wide community so that SMC becomes attractive to funders.

One participant said that, although he was not normally a risk-taker, when he *had* taken risks they had paid off. I suggested a related possibility posed as a question – could the organization afford *not* to commit itself to professionally executed outreach, business development, and fundraising?

Audra and I agreed to submit a formal proposal to the board by the May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting.

*(Note: Steve Crow declared that he wanted to defer agenda item #3, concerning the creation of a PROPS business plan, in favor of agenda items #4 and #5; we moved on to those items.)*

**Discussion: Agenda item #4 and #5: Encourage and facilitate  
programming created by and for the local high schools  
(Nathan Johnston)  
*and*  
Carry out a successful youth media project (Mark Stensaas)**

Nathan told the retreat participants about a project opportunity he was ready to pursue as an individual with Jefferson High School but which he thought might be a project with which SMC could be involved. This multimedia-oriented project has committed funding in the amount of \$2500 through grant monies and a private donation by a New York artist.

The project involves spending two weeks with ten students recording oral histories with audio production and revealing the “secret places” to which young people love to go in Siskiyou County, which will result in a printed map. It is seen as a kind of “youth audio tour” of the county; complete audio podcasts can be sold on iTunes and may perhaps be utilized by the Chamber of Commerce. The benefits associated with SMC involvement in the project include participation by artists outside the county, access to a younger audience, expansion into new mediums (radio? print?), and increased involvement with the community.

It was noted that COS could host a town hall showing of the production, and that video conferencing capability opened the possibility of county-wide participation. SMC could coordinate the project and do web distribution of the product.

This was seen as a potential opportunity to enter into a fiscal sponsorship relationship with the project producers. Although Jefferson High School can also serve as the fiscal sponsor, it was noted that SMC could do that as well – which role would involve funding management. The project was generally agreed to be in line with the SMC mission: a clear instance of using media for free speech. The possibility of including some of the young project participants in MCTV15 orientation meetings was discussed, as was the possibility that, of the 10 young people expected to participate in the project, 2 or 3 might well become passionate about this form of communication and “come out the other end” of the project as interns or volunteers at SMC.

Nathan agreed to submit a proposal to the board in time for the next meeting on May 4<sup>th</sup>, as the project is scheduled to begin in late May.

Mark added to the discussion his feeling that this was the kind of project he wants to see generated in order to integrate Siskiyou County high school students into SMC outreach and production work. Ideas for further youth involvement were discussed by the group, including periodic presentations of youth-documented events and subjects (once a week? once a month?)

and summer movies with young people. It was suggested that some of these types of projects might line up with ROP programs at COS as community education.

It was observed that collaboration with Siskiyou County high schools about video projects and products should be encouraged and promoted, and that SMC should look into donating equipment (“old tech”) to the high schools. Mark told the group that he had spoken with Siskiyou Union Schools Superintendent Mike Matheson about attending an SMC board meeting to talk about potential opportunities for engagement between the high schools and the Media Council. Mark agreed to pursue that contact and to arrange for Mike Matheson to visit a board meeting sometime in the next few months.

### **“Extras”**

During the retreat breaks, participants filled in by hand on a long piece of paper the events and circumstances that reflect SMC history from 2006 up to the present. That timeline is available for viewing and reference; contact Audra for information.

During the discussion times, a list was generated of SMC’s “Elephants in the Room:” circumstances that various members of the board and staff feel either obstruct positive organizational progress or contribute to negative interpersonal undercurrents. By the end of the retreat, that list read as follows:

## **“Elephants in the Room”**

MOU with COS  
Micromanaging / Audra and John  
Entrenched in history  
Reinventing the wheel  
Personal interests / ethics  
WIKI (+/-)  
Website  
Greg / \$\$\$

### **Siskiyou Media Council Board Retreat, April 10, 2010 Draft Primary Agenda**

Audra

Prioritize current, ongoing organizational activities/programs

Barbara

Address SMC staff need

Steve

Create a viable PROPS business plan

Mark

Encourage and facilitate programming created by and for the local high schools

Nathan

Carry out a successful youth media project

**Siskiyou Media Council Board Retreat, April 10, 2010**  
**Desired Retreat Outcomes**

*Content Outcomes*

clear decision about what staff we need to employ so we can get the business of the organization done.  
clear direction to ED on top three priorities for the coming year, with realistic determination as to resources for completion  
a list of things that aren't working well now  
identification of any SMC "elephants in the room" ... for the sake of moving forward  
blueprint for next year (*added during opening retreat session*)

*Process Outcomes*

a shared sense that we are together working towards our agreed upon goals  
a shared sense of "what's ideally right" when it comes to our working relationship as a board/organization  
a shared sense of "what's ideally right" for SMC's position/role/function in the community 1, 2, 5, 10 years from now  
a deeper understanding of each other's personal strengths in order to better understand our individual roles and the potential of our team  
a shared sense that "we are still a team" (*added during opening retreat session*)

**Siskiyou Media Council Board Retreat, April 10, 2010**  
**Discussion Guidelines**

Follow the agenda  
Share discussion equally among participants  
Speak only for yourself

Allow each speaker to complete their thought, making note of questions and directing them through facilitator when speaker is finished  
Postpone sidebar conversations until break time  
Hear others out before stating your position

Discuss ideas from a positive position, rather than one of argument or doubt  
Play the "believing game" with other's ideas -- start from a position of believing it will happen  
Be flexible if your idea is transformed somewhat by group process

**Siskiyou Media Council Board Retreat, April 10,2010**  
**Meeting Outline**

*(In CIRCLE)*

Opening remarks

Greg, Audra, Deborra

Self introductions – What strength(s) do you bring to SMC?

Consensus regarding norms, agenda, and outcomes

Deborra

Financial Overview!

Barbara/Annual Report

Exploring the SMC “Vision”

General discussion

Breakout groups

Group discussion -- notes on white board

*(@ TABLE)*

Agenda Item 1

15 minute break – Add to History Timeline!

Review norms and outcomes

Agenda Item 2

Agenda Item 3

15 minute break – Add to History Timeline!

Review norms and outcomes

Agenda Item 4

Review Action Items/review white board notes

Assignments – Who is responsible for what part of which action?

Directions to E.D.

15 minute break – Add to History Timeline

*(In CIRCLE)*

Outcomes

Promise: retreat report

Closure piece/hearing from everyone

Bye-bye!