

Exploring Asylum Hill – Hartford Public Access TV



By Bernie Michel

Hartford Public Access Television has been at Veeder Place in Asylum Hill for more than 20 years, so when AHNA hosted their Community Partners Appreciation Breakfast November 17th it was great to have Gil Martinez, their Executive Director attending. It didn't take long for Gil and I to find synergies between their communication efforts in Hartford and AHNA's efforts in Asylum Hill. The photo above shows just some of the progress that has been made by them in the seven years since Gil arrived.

As most everyone knows, technology and especially communications platform technology has grown by leaps and bounds in that time. Public Access Television started in the early 70's with the advent of cable as a transition from radio and TV broadcasting. The FCC included a requirement for cable companies that they support locally produced content. This took the form of a regular dollar amount payment to the public access station for every subscriber in a particular location. As a result, both Comcast and Frontier have been required to contribute a little less than \$10.00 for each subscriber, in the case of HPATV, those subscribers with a Hartford address. The changes in the industry, with the advent and growth of things like Facebook, YouTube, and such, not to mention Apple, Amazon and Roku TV, has meant that more and more people are finding new sources for content and entertainment, and HPATV needed to adapt as well. The pandemic that has affected so much of our lives has also greatly changed video broadcasting. Once a small niche for business, Zoom became a necessary tool for organizations everywhere. While it has eliminated geography as a barrier, for many it has left the quality of interactions diminished at best. Gil and HPATV have accepted that challenge. They have just completed their 7-year upgrade to the facility and capacity and very soon will begin broadcasting hybrid City Council meetings and more. Council members and some of the public will have the opportunity to attend in person while those who cannot will be able to participate remotely. This will require a significant upgrade in both expertise and equipment. Meetings are no longer limited to written minutes, but include audio/video recordings. Soon this will expand to all Council Committee meetings, and potentially neighborhood meetings such as AHNA's monthly meetings.

Gil's vision is to allow every NRZ, (beginning with AHNA) to have their meetings recorded and available to all who want over their broadcast channels. That will include cable, Apple, Amazon and Roku TV as well as Facebook and YouTube. Just one more thing to be Thankful for this Thanksgiving season.