

# AMHERSTMEDIA.ORG

## Rules of the House

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# Welcome

We are pleased that you are joining Amherst Media as a Member, sponsor, Producer or any combination thereof. We want your interaction at Amherst Media to be one that inspires, nurtures and provides the necessary training and guidance you require in fulfilling your goals and objectives. The following guidelines will help you get the most from your experience.

The Staff and Board of Directors are committed to keeping the organization up-to-date in the ever-changing world of media production and distribution.

## 1) Introduction

Amherst Media, henceforth referred to as AM, began as the CCATV in 1976, when the Town of Amherst utilized the prevailing law to negotiate with cable companies for up to three channels on their local cable networks. These channels were for use by local residents, with money for operation and equipment funded by local cable company revenues, *particularly subscriber's fees*. AM currently runs three access channels: one dedicated for public use, one for educational use, and a third for governmental use. AM is dedicated to meeting residents' interest in and need for the arts, education, community events, local government and informational programming through access to cable television, training in the use of media technology equipment, and the transmission of programs over various forms of media distribution.

The fundamental principle that informs community media access is the right for Free Speech: Public access is for everyone. AM's purpose is to make it possible for people to get their information or views out to their fellow citizens. Amherst Media is a non-profit corporation with a local Board of Directors, partly elected by Members and partly appointed by the Boards of Selectmen and Schools.

## 2) Policies and Procedures

People who want to make use of the facilities and equipment, provided through the Town's cable contract with the cable company, need to have an idea of what they may be asked to do and what rules AM adheres to. The purpose of this document, *Rules of the House*, is to articulate them as clearly as we can.

## 3) Roles

### Board of Directors

AM's Board of Directors establishes policy for the operation of the station with the goal of providing fair, equitable access to its equipment and facilities, and to protect the Town's investment. All Members in good standing run for Election to the Board.

### Staff

AM's Staff trains people to produce and distribute, maintain and update the equipment and facilities, schedule programming, and bring community organizations and volunteers together in an environment that fosters the best use of a media center. The Staff work with residents who wish to record significant community events by attempting to link them with Community Producers. AM's Staff create procedures to implement the policies established by the Board of Directors. Your ideas to improve these procedures are always welcome.

### Member

Anyone 12 years or older who has paid for AM Membership is a Member. All Memberships - except Lifetime -are rolling and renew annually on the date of enrollment, they must be renewed on or before that date for continuance of Member privileges.

Unless otherwise advertised, you must be a Member to take courses, use AM's equipment or facilities, to vote in the Annual Meeting or to belong to the Board of Directors. To be eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting the voter must have been a Member 30 days prior to the date of the Annual Meeting. Basic Membership fees are set by the Board of Directors.

## **Community Producer**

A Community Producer is a Member who completes appropriate Amherst Media training programs or who demonstrates comparable training and/or experience, and/or is trained by Staff to operate specific equipment.

## **Intern**

An Intern is an individual looking to gain experience in broadcast production in exchange for college credits. Interested applicants must be currently enrolled in 2 or 4 year accredited institution and available to commit to a minimum of 4 hours a week. Interns must sign a term of employment contract with AM in addition to any other paperwork required by their respective academic institution. Interns will attend a day-long orientation/workshop for training on equipment and various production techniques.

A one month probationary period follows the training and contract signing, at which point it will be determined if the Internship is working out for both parties. If the Internship is continued, there will be a final evaluation at the end of the contracted period of 1 or 2 semesters. This is in addition to any evaluation requested by the Intern's institution of study (if any) and will also form the basis for any later referrals or job references.

## **Volunteer Intern**

Volunteer Intern refers to individuals who are not currently enrolled at a 2 or 4 year University or College, have purchased a Membership and have requested to participate in a specific Intern position at Amherst Media. Volunteer Interns are required to commit to a weekly minimum, but should request volunteer status renewal every 3 months.

## **Work Study Staff**

Work Study Staff are individuals who have been hired under the "Work Study Program" agreement with area colleges. A Work Study Staff member will sign a contract for services detailing the work relationship with AM and Staff. Normally, a Work Study position allows for a minimum of 8 hours a week.

Staff, upon the direction of the Executive Director, may be assigned to cover special events in Amherst if volunteers and/ or Interns are not available.

## **4) Hours of Operation**

AM's hours of operation will be posted at the station, and online at AmherstMedia.org. Every attempt will be made, within the confines of funding and availability of Staff, to provide hours that meet the needs of Producers and cablecasting.

AM is closed on New Year's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Presidents' Day, Patriot's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Columbus Day, Veterans' Day, Thanksgiving (Thursday through Sunday), and Christmas Day. When a holiday falls on a Saturday, the station will be closed on the preceding Friday. When a holiday falls on Sunday, the station will be closed on the succeeding Monday. The station may occasionally be closed at other times due to Staff unavailability or because of special productions. When possible, such closings will be posted in advance. Call the station or check AmherstMedia.org for further details.

## 5) Conduct

AM expects ordinary respect for the rights of others and care when using equipment and facilities. We do, however, want to emphasize certain especially important rules:

No one will be allowed to operate equipment or remain at AM while using or appearing to be under the influence of alcohol or drugs. We do not allow smoking at AM, including on the front walkway.

The use of abusive language or harassment of any kind, directed at Staff, Members or guests, is not permitted at AM.

We only permit food and drink in Staff offices, in the conference room, in the front lobby lounge, and in Studio A only during public events and meetings. In no case is food or drink permitted near equipment in editing suites.

The Staff work responsibly within the guidelines of the Rules of the House and appreciate your respectful cooperation. Violation of these rules may result in being asked to leave AM, and possible suspension of privileges. Repeat violations may result in permanent loss of Member privileges.

## 6) Access to Facilities and Equipment

AM's equipment and facilities are available to Community Producers at no charge on a first-come, first-served, non-discriminatory basis. Anyone operating AM equipment must have completed the appropriate training class(es). Other qualified persons may occasionally be permitted to use Amherst Media's equipment and facilities with the approval of the Staff.

All programming produced using any AM equipment and/ or facilities will be for cable and/ or web casting on AM's designated distribution platforms, unless otherwise indicated by the Executive Director. First use, in every case unless expressly stated and approved in the Program Proposal, must be at Amherst Media. Productions must be shared with the cable viewing public of Amherst and Pelham unless otherwise permitted by appropriate Staff.

All equipment use will be in the context of an approved Program Proposal. The Community Producer must completely fill out the Program Proposal and obtain written approval from the Staff. Any significant changes in the production direction must be preceded by an updated and approved new proposal.

Community Producers under the age of 18 must have the Program Proposal signed by his/her parent or guardian or other responsible adult who assumes responsibility. A parent or the guardian of a minor must also sign a document accepting responsibility for actions of his/her minor child before that child may borrow equipment or sign out facility use.

## 7) Training

Amherst Media offers basic workshops in video field and studio production, digital post-production and specialized courses on related topics such as audio, web media and digital imaging. Some workshops may require Membership or offer Members a reduced rate. **The basic Field Production and Editing workshops are the prerequisites for using AM's video cameras, editing suites and most other equipment.**

Attendance at all meetings of a class or workshop is mandatory for certification. A non-refundable retainer is required when registering for any course or testing out. It will be forfeited in the event of non-completion or no-show.

If finances present a possible obstacle, we encourage use of the Scholarship Fund. Full and half scholarship arrangements, made with the Staff using a standard form available at the front desk, are confidential except to involved Staff and teachers. Interns, Board Members and Staff may take any class/workshop free of charge, with Executive Director's knowledge and permission, except for Apple Authorized Trainings and other non-entry level workshops.

Experienced Producers may bypass basic Field Production and Editing workshops by demonstrating competency at the discretion of appropriate Staff, but will still need to pay a one time fee for equipment access.

## 8) Program Format

Programs submitted for Cable and/or web casting at AM's facilities must be on a format supported by AM and must meet physical, technical and production standards.

Community Producers must either provide or purchase from AM high quality videotape or data cards for raw footage. AM will attempt to provide the best possible prices for these formats. AM's Staff may forbid the use of any videotape, data card or other means of recording that in their opinion will be harmful to station equipment.

The Program Manager will require all submitted programs to be either on DVD or a file sharing format as indicated on all editing suites desktops for cable and/or web as well as inclusion in station library achieves. Accompanying metadata will be required from the Community Producer including running time of the finished show as well as Creative Commons designation,, genre identification and a brief description of the program.

**“Everything produced using any Amherst Media equipment, facilities and/or resources must include Amherst Media's current credits at the end, and use the Creative Commons “Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike” license (CC BY-NC-SA), for attribution to the Producer(s) and Amherst Media unless the Producer(s) have explicit written permission otherwise from the Executive Director.”**

There is a full description of the license here: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/> This is how Creative Commons describes their licenses "With a Creative Commons license, you keep your copyright but allow people to copy and distribute your work provided they give you credit - and only on the conditions you specify.". The license AM requires allows sharing for non-commercial purposes as long as one attributes; give credit to the Producer(s).

**Completed programs must be given soon after completion to Staff for cataloging and scheduling, along with the Cablecast Request form.** Preferences for cable casting dates and times should be indicated on the form. Specific date and time requests will be taken into consideration but cannot be guaranteed.

Each individual program and each series must have on file a signed Statement of Compliance stating that the signer is solely responsible for program content and holds AM and its officers, directors, employees and agents harmless from liability or legal fees and expenses which may be incurred as a result of cable or web casting. The Statement of Compliance must be filled out and signed prior to the program's being distributed. Minors may not sign a Statement of Compliance, which must be signed by a responsible adult.

Regularly scheduled series time slots will be allocated at the discretion of AM Staff, provided ample time remains available for other community programming requests. Producers who have been granted a regular scheduled series time slot are responsible for providing the Program Manager with a program in a timely manner. A series may be weekly, biweekly or monthly. A series may be allocated a maximum of thirteen programs, after which reapplication may be required. Reapplication will be considered in the light of other scheduling demands. If a series Producer fails to produce new, original programming for more than two consecutive showings or fails to have the program ready for scheduled cablecast, the time slot may be reassigned to another Producer.

Scheduled programs may be preempted for time-sensitive programming. Time-sensitive status will be granted by Staff based on a written statement provided by the Producer attached to the Cablecast Request form accompanied by the finished program ready for cablecast.

As noted above, AM reserves the right to reject a program if it does not meet minimum technical standards. While locally produced programs are not expected to look as though produced for commercial television, tapes/DVD's which do not carry a stable signal over the cable system or which might damage AM's equipment will not be cablecast. Videos from YouTube are not of high enough quality for broadcast and therefore will not be accepted. Videos that are filmed as 16:9 widescreen should be letterboxed to 4:3 standard ratio.

The Producer(s) must secure all appropriate releases (including releases from copyrights, talent, etc.) and be sure that the materials they are using are allowed to be licensed with a Creative Commons "Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike" license. The Producer(s) alone is responsible for any disputes that may arise.

## 9) Equipment and Facilities Use

The primary purpose for using AM's equipment and facilities is for producing programs for AM's cable channels 12, 15 or 17 and/or its web site. AM's equipment may not be used for commercial or personal purposes without full knowledge and written consent of the Executive Director. The decision will be based on the merits of each individual request. This implies that no one may benefit financially from their use of AM's equipment or facilities, nor may they accept payment from anyone involved in a production or sell videotapes produced with AM's equipment or facilities without full knowledge and permission obtained from the Executive Director.

**Only AM's Staff or trained Interns may schedule equipment and studio time for active Members.** Within the bounds of equal and fair access, equipment and facilities are available on a first-come, first-served basis. AM's Staff will try to insure that no individual or group monopolizes use of facilities or equipment. We suggest that equipment be reserved as early as possible, but no more than one month ahead of time. *All equipment reservation, sign out and return must be done by the Community Producer authorized for the project.*

Community Producers may reserve camcorders and other key equipment such as lighting kits and mixers for a maximum of three days per week, and for no more than two *consecutive* days at a time except over weekends or holidays. The Executive Director or appropriate Staff may provide exception to this rule when production opportunities may require additional use. Unless approved by the Staff, only one camcorder may be signed out per Community Producer.

**Equipment must be checked out and in by a Staff member or trained Intern, who will ask Community Producers to fill out and sign an Equipment Checkout form.** Community Producers are advised to set up and test equipment before taking it away from AM. If a Community Producer decides not to take this precaution and returns damaged or broken equipment, s/he will have to assume responsibility for it. Thorough check out and check in of equipment requires a minimum of 15 minutes, so Community Producers should allow sufficient time when making transportation arrangements. Equipment may not be checked in or checked out during the last half hour before closing. ***In-house projects must be closed down and all equipment packed away no less than 15 minutes before closing.***

Users of the equipment or facilities must report any defects, damage or problems to Staff immediately upon discovering it or when returning equipment, being as specific as possible about the nature and conditions under which problems have occurred in order to facilitate repairs. Users are responsible for loss or damage due to negligence or abuse while equipment is checked out to them. Inadvertent damage or loss not attributable to negligent or irresponsible use may be covered by the Town of Amherst's insurance policy but the Producer will most likely be required to pay any uninsured consequential costs, including the deductible, unless there are mitigating financial circumstances. Payment arrangements will be made with the Staff.

Because others may be depending on the equipment, users are expected to return borrowed equipment on time. We'll warn you the first time. After that, late returns may result in loss of privileges. In order to avoid tying up equipment wanted by others, a user who is more than 30 minutes late picking up equipment will be considered a "no show" and the equipment may be released for others to use. The same "no show" policy applies to the studios and editing suites. Once a replacement assignee has the equipment or facility, the tardy person who originally made the reservation cannot displace her or him.

Cancellation of equipment and facility reservations must be made 24 hours in advance except in cases of emergency. Staff must be alerted of late returns a minimum of one hour prior to the due time so the subsequent user can be notified. Repeated last minute cancellations, unwarned late returns or no-shows will result in loss of privileges.

An eligible user under the age of 18 who wishes to borrow equipment must be accompanied by a parent, guardian or qualified adult access user who must sign the check-out sheet accepting responsibility for the equipment and its use by the minor. A blanket acceptance of responsibility form, for that minor, may be left on file by the responsible parent or guardian.

**Only authorized personnel may work on or repair AM's equipment.** Damage caused by unauthorized repair, tampering or maintenance will be charged to the user and loss of privileges will result. Dishonest misrepresentation about damage could result in permanent suspension of privileges.

**Equipment should not be kept in a car overnight or for long periods of time.** The car must be locked and the equipment kept out of plain sight. In very hot weather, the equipment should be taken with the Producer rather than be left in the trunk or sunlit car. In cold weather, the equipment should warm to room temperature before the case is opened to prevent condensation.

We **expect that AM's facilities will be left clean and neat.** Failure to clean up properly may result in loss of equipment and facility privileges.

All observed breaking of rules, harassments and other significant incidents will be noted by Staff in a written Incident Report, and placed in the Incident logbook. The "written up" person(s) may request a copy of the Incident Report, and may file their own version of the incident in the logbook if desired. The logbook will be kept in a safe, non-public location.

## 10) Studio Use

Scheduling rules apply to both Large Studio A and Small Studio B. Community Producers must have an approved program proposal, and have completed any necessary trainings before scheduling studio time in either studio. Studio productions are to be scheduled during regular station operating hours unless the Staff grants permission. Scheduled studio time in any studio includes time needed for set up, focusing lighting, taping, breakdown and cleanup.

Studio B can be operated by a single person. Anyone using this studio must be appropriately trained. Studio A, on the other hand, is a full production studio with a control room. All crew handling equipment must be trained for studio production to use this studio and the control room. Live Studio A productions require the pre-arranged supervision of a Staff member or delegated trained Intern. The Community Producer is responsible for the behavior and actions of their guests, talent and others in attendance.

## 11) Editing and Post-Production

A Community Producer must be certified in order to schedule Editing time. If possible, cancellations should be made 24 hours in advance of scheduled time. Under ordinary circumstances, Producers may schedule up to three, four-hour sessions per week in the editing suite. Additional time will be allocated when slots are open.

Attendees of an AM Editing workshop will be given an account on our dedicated Edit Server. Use of the server is only for the current project, upon its completion all materials may be backed up to the Community Producers own external data storage device, and then deleted. Programs will not be aired until these steps are confirmed.

Users must not tamper with the computers, enter system files, change preferences or use functions with which they are not familiar. A Producer will be held responsible for repair or replacement of abused equipment, and/or for the cost of a computer technician's time to reinstall software or debug the system.

All downloaded files or music/video clips must be removed from the computer at the end of the work session. Minors may not initiate purchases over the Internet. No pornographic sites or content may be downloaded, signed up for or bookmarked using AM's computers.

## 12) Violations of Policy

No violations of local, state or U.S. law may be planned, enacted for or accomplished using AM's computers, equipment or facilities. Any such violations, when confirmed by Staff, can lead to immediate suspension of Member privileges. If charges are brought, reinstatement (if warranted) will be delayed until after the conclusion of criminal proceedings.

Other serious violations are commercial or profit-making use of AM's equipment/facilities without permission; misrepresentation of user's affiliation with AM (Producers may identify themselves only as Community Producers - not as Staff or employees or as in any way representing AM); falsifying forms; drug or alcohol consumption on the premises or equipment use while impaired; taking equipment without permission or offering its use to uncertified persons; abuse or illegal use of equipment (including attempted repair); facility and computer reconfiguration without Staff participation; unsafe transport or other gross negligent treatment of equipment; abuse of Staff; and intentional copyright infringement. Any such violation can result in an immediate 90-day suspension of privileges. The violator may also be held responsible for full repair or replacement charges. Any subsequent major violation will result in the permanent loss of AM's equipment and facilities privileges.

Other violations listed previously in this document include: failure to cancel a reservation for equipment or facilities, repeated late pick-up or return of equipment without notification and approval, failure to clean up after using the facilities, eating or drinking in non-designated areas, smoking in the facilities or in the immediate vicinity of equipment when away from the station and using equipment without adequate training.

Community Producers are encouraged to resolve difficulties on the Staff level. Any Community Producer wishing to appeal an action of the Staff may request a hearing before the Staff and the Board of Directors.

## 13) Guidelines for Suspensions

Guidelines for suspensions are as follows:

First Offense – Warning, with possible one-day suspension or appropriate restitution

Second Offense – One-week suspension from use of AM's equipment and facilities

Third Offense – Two-week suspension

Subsequent Offenses – As determined by Staff in consultation with the other Staff, up to and including permanent exclusion from the facility.

All warnings, suspensions and other consequences will be immediately notified to the Member in writing. Appeals of suspensions or other ruled consequences may be appealed to AM's Board of Directors and should be sent to the President of the Board within 10 days of the action.

## 14) Underwriting and Grants

AM's support from Amherst covers only the bare minimum of its expenses.

For this reason, Community Producers are encouraged to apply for underwriting or grants that aid in the development, production, distribution or improvement of programs. In addition to cash, donations can also be in the form of in-kind contributions. No grant should be written on behalf of AM or one that requires AM's equipment without full knowledge and permission of the Executive Director. When applying for underwriting or grants, Producers should itemize AM's overhead at a rate negotiated with the Executive Director. The Executive Director must also be informed in advance about any underwriting credits and consulted about the proper format for credit.

Commercial use of AM's equipment and facilities is defined by strict guidelines developed by the Executive Director. Underwriting and Sponsorship of AM's programs is encouraged, but shall adhere to the Public Broadcast System's standards.

Community Producers and crew must read, sign-off, and abide by all station policies and rules including these *Rules of the House*, as well as signing copyright release forms and indemnifying and holding the station harmless against misuse.

**If a Community Producer subsequently realizes income from any footage produced or edited with AM's equipment, AM must be reimbursed at commercial rates for the equipment and facilities used to produce the source production. This consequential income, as received, must be split equally with AM until it is fully reimbursed. All further income is the Community Producer's.**

## 15) Community Calendar

AM's Community Calendar may be used by non-profits, community groups, and Town Departments to publicize activities and events. To keep announcements readable, AM suggests giving only the basic information for the event (i.e. who, what, when, where, and why and a maximum of 160 characters per each). Pre-designed bulletins should be 720 pixels by 360 pixels in size. PDF and JPG files are acceptable formats. Video bulletins should be no longer than 30 seconds and can be submitted as a DVD or a digital file. When submitting a digital file, AM recommends MPEG, MP4 or MOV formats.

## 16) Use of Facilities by Non-Member Organizations

In special situations AM's facilities, including the studio, editing suites, conference room and screening facilities, may be rented to organizations for meetings or production of videos subject to space and time availability.

The decision to rent will be made by the Executive Director. AM's Staff must be on premises whenever outside Producers use the facilities unless granted a waiver. Users will pay for Staff time and for any supplies required. Rates for AM's facilities and Staff are available from the Staff.

**For further clarification, feel free to ask Staff.**

Your suggestions are always welcome, please write to the Executive Director at [director@amherstmedia.org](mailto:director@amherstmedia.org)

For questions, please write to [info@amherstmedia.org](mailto:info@amherstmedia.org) or call 413-259-3300.