

## Debra Thompson

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**From:** Stephen Giesbrecht  
**Sent:** Thursday, April 26, 2018 9:35 AM  
**To:** Debra Thompson  
**Subject:** FW: Research results

For the packet on this issue

**From:** John Hamilton  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 25, 2018 12:06 PM  
**To:** Stephen Giesbrecht <sgiesbrecht@petersburgak.gov>  
**Cc:** Kelly Swihart <kswihart@petersburgak.gov>; Jeff Meucci <jrmeucciscuba@gmail.com>  
**Subject:** Research results

Steve,

This week I've spent some hours on the phone talking to officials in New England and Texas about their experiences with the television shows 'North Woods Law' and 'Lone Star Law'. I'll try to pare it down to the essentials.

Both places gave completely positive feedback on their experiences with the production company. Engel Entertainment produces the shows and sells them to a network. The network owns the product at that point but even after the shows are being broadcast, it is still Engel Entertainment that is producing the show and dealing with the agencies involved. Engel hires film crews who come out to the locations and shoot over a period of several months. The film crews are sub-contractors but that community is relatively small and you apparently keep getting the same group of people coming in. This month it's crew A, next month it's crew B, the month after its crew A again. The official in Texas told me that law enforcement shows are kind of a niche in the reality tv world and the crews who do those shows tend to specialize in them. They are very professional. They know from experience where to stand, what to do (or not do), and for the most part, officers dealing with public contacts can quickly just forget they're there. When they are on scene, if an officer lets a bad word come out of his mouth or doesn't like the way he presented something, the officer himself has the authority to tell the crew to dump that footage. It never even gets back to New York for the editing process. Obviously, they do not have dynamic situations re-shot by the suspect prior to going to jail. There are no staged incidents or anything like that. It really is a reality show. It's **NOT** the Alaska Bush People, which is a scripted program.

The footage goes to New York which does a rough cut, which is sent back to the agency. Agency staff goes over the rough cut and the contract gives the agency absolute veto authority over it. If the agency doesn't like it, it doesn't go further. If a storyline just needs a bad word taken out or an officer commits a minor boo boo and that shouldn't go to air, the company and the agency work together to come up with something that doesn't look bad for the agency or community and still portrays the story the company wants to put out. Once that's done the company does a fine cut. That is again sent to the agency for approval. In New Hampshire, they involve the state's travel & tourism bureau in the editing process at that point. Those folks have made valuable suggestions and influenced the final product in positive ways. In Texas it's just a high ranking agency official involved in the editing process. I can see Debbie and/or Liz being involved in the process at some point to get their point of view represented. Company doesn't care one way or another. Once the fine cut is approved the 'locked' or 'final' cut is done and sent to the agency for final approval. In one case, after a segment was broadcast for the first time worldwide, a local resident, who was not involved in an incident, objected to their house being portrayed in an episode. The production company, the agency and the network worked together and the segment was altered for further broadcast (re-runs), removing 45 seconds of footage showing that concerned resident's house. They really are quite professional and very pleasant to work with.

Once footage is shot, the production company follows up with civilians and gets waivers to allow their images and voices to be broadcast. The Agencies are not involved in that at all. In the overwhelming majority of cases, they get their waivers, even from people being arrested for doing something stupid as well as illegal. Even in a state as populous as New Hampshire, the public quickly figures out what's going on and starts eagerly asking the officers upon contact, "where's the camera crew"? I guess everybody wants to be on TV, even when they're getting a speeding ticket. The guy in New Hampshire remarked on how good the film crews are at getting really incredible footage of the state's scenic vistas. I've been to New Hampshire a number of times, and it's okay, but imagine what those guys could do with Devil's Thumb and an iceberg on the beach!

This wouldn't cost us anything but time. The New Hampshire guy said figure about three hours of time per episode. They are on year three. They've done 24 episodes and are contracted for ten more. He said initially they were wary about it, but it's been overwhelmingly positive and its more than worth it. This year their open house had a 25% increase in attendance and he's now getting 21 year old kids applying for jobs that are telling him they decided they wanted to be a conservation officer when they first saw North Woods Law six or seven years ago, when the show was in Maine. The Texas guy also said there's been a significant spike in recruitment response since the show has been on the air. There's also been an overwhelmingly positive response from citizens, with the most common comment being, "I had no idea you guys did all that stuff". In my experience over the years, people on ride-alongs say the same thing. Almost every one of them.

The production company is pitching this show as something a bit different from the two shows I've mentioned. The premise of the show they're pitching, and the networks are quite interested in, is the experience of lesser 48 officers moving to Alaska, and what challenges they face, both on and off the job. That is part of the reason my concerns about Petersburg not having enough excitement for them didn't faze them. This show would not just be about Petersburg. The company is in negotiations with Fairbanks, Haines, Cordova, and Craig. They asked Ketchikan to be involved, and got manager approval, but the new chief there said his plate is just too full right now. Perhaps I'm prejudiced, but I think Petersburg could not help but look better than all of those communities. In addition, I'd put my current staff up against anybody's. I wouldn't pick anybody in the current hiring process who didn't measure up to that current staff, assuming I'm still here when the next officer/s get hired. [REDACTED]

Given we have total veto power over what's being shown, I don't see a down side here. It's like having a world class PR firm for our department and community for a small investment in time, and no outlay in money.

In my last email to you I suggested the company representative would be delighted to make themselves available telephonically to answer questions during the May 7<sup>th</sup> meeting. I have since confirmed that with them. Ms. Smith told me the owner of the company himself could attend, with some time to make arrangements. Let me know if you want to pursue either of those avenues. If there are additional questions you would like answered, let me know and I'll get the answers for you.

Ms. Smith asked me if it would be alright if she reached out to some of our current staff on an individual and voluntary bases and talked to them about the show via skype. They are obviously looking to see what kind of 'movie star' (my words) potential our officers have. This would be with the understanding that nothing whatsoever has been approved or promised. I told her not without approval from you, as I didn't want Assembly members, particularly ones opposed to the concept, thinking we were overstepping our boundaries. She understood completely, but would still like to see what we have.

I await your thoughts.

John