

COMMUNITY ACCESS

# Lights to dim at CTV, but show not over

Temporary closure planned while group retools operations

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SANTA CRUZ — Community Television, the producer and broadcaster of local government and public access programming, will temporarily close its offices later this month.

The move is a significant step in an effort to save local public access TV by reshaping how the nonprofit operates now that it faces a loss of operating funds in mid-2014. When it reopens in April, officials say, CommunityTV will be more do-it-yourself than ever before.

"It's much more automated, and members are (going to be) dealing with producing their own content," said Keith Gudger, who chairs CommunityTV's board of directors.

The four-month closure is needed while CommunityTV retools operations in its Pacific Avenue office. A staffer that once helped public members produce and edit

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## CTV

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shows is among the funding casualties, part of shift driven by the loss of operating funds that has reduced the organization's annual budget from roughly \$800,000 to \$300,000.

"We jokingly describe the transition we're going through as post-apocalypse," said Kathy Bisbee, CommunityTV's interim executive-director, who splits time with

her full-time job at Gilroy-based CMAP.

The revamped CommunityTV would look more like Denver Open Media, which underwent similar changes. "They're all about putting the media center in the hands of the people, and that's what we're doing as well," Bisbee said.

CommunityTV also brought in TV personality Romney Dunbar to help produce content, plan a fund-raising drive in late April and is scouting for a possible new home, including Cabrillo

College.

The crisis is driven by changes to a federal law that restrict funding, derived from local cable franchise fees, to capital purchases rather than personnel. Without enough staff, CommunityTV has already started to downshift the amount of local coverage it provides, from high school football games to civic events, and it's unclear how government program will be affected.

Bisbee, a part-timer whose contract runs through June

2014, was brought on by CommunityTV's board of directors as part of its search for a new business model. That happens to be when CommunityTV's franchise contract with the county and city of Santa Cruz expires, though there is a one-year renewal option.

"I'm very confident that we're doing what we need to do to get that renewal," Gudger said.

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