‘Megyn Kelly Today’ Ratings Not All Sunshine for NBC’s New Morning Host

With its host reportedly making a salary of $17 million a year and a new set having been constructed within NBC’s Rockefeller Plaza headquarters in Midtown Manhattan, “Megyn Kelly Today” is more costly than the previous 9 a.m. segment of “Today.” Losing viewers, in the long run, would be a problem.

Ms. Kelly’s first week was highly scrutinized, and the early reviews for the show were brutal. She addressed them at the end of her hour on Sept. 29, saying, “It’s been very exciting, it’s been so educational, I’ve been just so delighted by the media response, which is really” — she shook her head before continuing — “no.”

After a breath, she added, “The viewer response has been awesome!”

As Ms. Kelly moved away from the sometimes prosecutorial persona she inhabited during much of her tenure at Fox, there were a few bumpy moments. The “Will & Grace” star Debra Messing said after appearing on the show that she regretted having done so. Jane Fonda blanched when Ms. Kelly asked her to talk about plastic surgery procedures she has had. And a vulgarity uttered by a cameraman who inadvertently walked into a shot went viral.

Another awkward moment came on Oct. 3, two days after the mass shooting in Las Vegas, when Ms. Kelly cut off Tom Brokaw, the former longtime NBC anchor and network eminence, as he went into a lengthy discourse on gun rights and the National Rifle Association.

“Got it,” Ms. Kelly said, adding that she had to “leave it at that, Tom,” before shifting to a commercial break. (Mr. Brokaw later told The Washington Post that he was having problems with his hearing aid. “I’m a Kelly fan,” he added.)

Ms. Kelly has said that the show would be a mix of a talk show and a news show, and it has moved in both directions, from typical morning fare — celebrity interviews, a segment involving an adorable crime-fighting dog — to gritty discussions of the O. J. Simpson and Menendez brothers cases.

NBC has said from the start that it would be patient with the show. Andrew Lack, the network’s news chairman, told affiliates months ago that he did not expect things to be “perfect” with both of Ms. Kelly’s new programs — she also hosts a Sunday evening show, which is on hiatus — in the early going.

At least for now, it appears that Ms. Kelly’s main competitor, ABC’s “Live with Kelly and Ryan,” will maintain a lead in the ratings. In the top 56 media markets, “Live” beat “Megyn Kelly Today” by 21 percent in households last week, according to Nielsen.

Exact audience figures for last week’s episodes of “Live,” a syndicated show featuring Kelly Ripa and Ryan Seacrest, will not be available until next week. It averaged an 2.8 million viewers in the week before Ms. Kelly’s debut, with 915,000 in the 25-to-54 age range.

For Ms. Kelly and NBC executives, there was one hopeful nugget buried in the Nielsen data: The number of viewers in the 25-to-54 demographic was 755,000 on Sept. 29, after having fallen to roughly 649,000 the day before.