

Cable Advisory Committee Minutes

April 13, 2009

Approved: June 15, 2009

Present: William R. Tice, Jr., Chair; Justin Romeo; Michael Tattersall; Madonna McKenzie, Town Administrator; Elizabeth D. Barnett, Administrative Coordinator.

Guest: Timothy Kelly, Comcast Corporation.

1. Meeting called to order at 7 p.m.
2. Mr. Kelly, of Comcast introduced the process of renegotiating a new contract with an incumbent cable television service provider. He explained that with an incumbent cable service provider, a town would be able to negotiate a ten-year license. In contrast, with a new provider would require the Town to negotiate a fifteen-year license.

He listed the steps necessary to negotiate a new contract with an incumbent which include: an evaluation of Comcast's service provision; the franchise fee (which he gave as 3%); and an overall evaluation of Comcast's performance or the "ascertainment hearing." He said that in many instances in other municipalities, Town Counsel will attend the night of the ascertainment hearing, and following this, the documents will be signed immediately following the hearing.

Madonna McKenzie shared that there had been no recent problems reported to the Board of Selectmen, but there had been calls earlier in the Comcast contract. Mr. Kelly replied that the "fiber coaxial connections have taken the static out of the whole system" and that static had been the causes of earlier problems.

He also went on to note that with the introduction of "node splits," five hundred customers would be served by two nodes (250/250), which translated into faster internet speeds. He noted that internet speeds are not part of the franchise agreement. In addition, network enhancement had been extended to basic standard digital, with one digital conversion box for each television (under FCC 2012 guidelines).

William Tice inquired how much Comcast cable television coverage does the Town have? The discussion continued with questions about the cable television access on North Road. Mr. Kelly explained that many customers were less interested in cable television service than the internet access. This proposed renegotiated license will be for video service. The Comcast internet and telephone service are not part of the license.

Continuing with the discussion on the cost of utility installation and the overall affect on the franchise fee which the Town receives, Mr. Kelly also said that the "head fiber line" will continue to stay on poles and not be buried underground.

William Tice also inquired as to why the Carlisle rates for cable television service were higher than Concord? Mr. Kelly said that pricing was regulated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department on Telecommunications and Cable. William Tice also inquired as to what were the benefits of staying with Comcast? Mr. Kelly replied: customer service; infrastructure in Town; and it was quite difficult not to renew a license, e.g. municipalities had to demonstrate a poor level of service/problems.

The discussion then focused briefly on other service providers: Verizon, Cablevision and satellite service. The question was asked: would they have the resources to serve the town?

3. It was agreed by the Cable Advisory Committee's (CAC) that the next step was to examine the community's cable service needs and the best use of future franchise fees.

Questions included: would it be possible to bring "fiber" to the Carlisle Public Schools? Would it be possible to have a listing of roads not currently served? Mr. Kelly explained that the Comcast franchise fee and monies available to the Town were in part a function of installation costs per mile. Mr. Kelly explained that if the Town decided that it wanted to extend service to areas, which might be uneconomic, this might potentially decrease the amount of franchise fees available for other uses.

4. The meeting adjourned at 9 p.m. The next CAC meeting is scheduled for Monday May 11th at 7 p.m. at the Concord Carlisle Cable Television (CC-TV)'s studio in Concord.

Minutes submitted by Elizabeth D. Barnett