

Town of Kingston, Massachusetts

Cable Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

January 17, 2007

Present:

Committee Members: Bill Arrowsmith, Bob Pinato, Ed Bielecki

Town Administrator: Kevin Donovan

Town Counsel: Bill Hewig

Absent: *Stan Antoniotti*

Excused: Tom Bolus

The first meeting of the revamped KCAC began at 10:05 am.

Everyone introduced themselves to the group.

Since there was a quorum, the first order of business was to elect the Chair and secretary. We agreed to elect a Vice Chair at a later meeting with all in attendance.

A motion was made by Ed Bielecki "to elect Bill Arrowsmith as Chair of the Committee". Seconded by Bob Pinato. The motion was approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Bob Pinato to "elect Ed Bielecki as Secretary". Seconded by Bill Arrowsmith. The motion was approved unanimously.

Town Administrator Kevin Donovan suggested to the Committee that we hear from Counsel Bill Hewig regarding the upcoming town and Comcast negotiations.

Bill mentioned the FCC makes the regulations and we can negotiate with the cable company for money up to 5% of the yearly cable subscriber income of the company in our town. This could include a third access channel, local connections and line runs and equipment.

The state of MA deals with cable rates and programming is tied into the marketplace.

We have six weeks before the current agreement ends. Usually the process can take up to three years.

WE need to have a public hearing to ask our community, what should the cable company be asked to do.

There was testimony on November 14, 2006 including Nancy Richard of PAC TV, our access provider. She suggested adding one more access channel and increasing from 3 to 5% what Kingston gets from gross annual revenue of Comcast from subscribers. Bill also mentioned the upgrade of the I/Net, any other town buildings needing a cable drop, new cable needs and any other technological needs of the town from the Town's Technology person.

Ed Bielecki asked Kevin if Kingston had a technology person. We do not. Kevin suggested Counsel continue to meet with us at our next meeting or the one after to explain more to us. *No one can contact Town Counsel directly, IT must go through Kevin. He stated we can have at least two more opportunities to meet with Town Counsel.* The Committee will eventually go before the selectmen with our recommendation.

Additional things to consider: cameras, editing equipment etc.

Bob Pinato brought up Town and Country Estates, which has it's own agreement with Comcast. Town Counsel said this is a private matter between the two parties and is not under the purview of the Cable Advisory Committee or the town.

Bill Hewig continued with an overview of deregulation and where it stands. There may be a time when the state takes over power from the towns in dealing with the cable companies. The flow of money into the local PEG outlets would continue. There would be a continuation of the right to cable all of a town.

Bill was unclear where state legislation might be going and it is still unclear where the feds are going with legislation. Cable licensing will be different. There will still be licenses and a time limit on them. There will continue to be payments to communities to keep local access.

Verizon has been looking to change the playing field, but everyone is jockeying for position.

Bill H continued explaining various instances of negotiating with the cable company. He reviewed the instance of the short amount of time we have before the current agreement ends and that this has occurred many times where a new agreement was worked out months after the current agreement ended. He mentioned that things would continue as usual. *Business as usual means continuation with assent by the cable company pending negotiation of a new one.* It is better to do things right away. The possible downside to not doing the agreement right away is that the Congress could act quicker than we figure and we may lose the ability to negotiate.

Question: What do we really need in this community?

What we actually need vs. more than that. We want to get what we really need and no more since people's cable bills will go up. From 3 to 5 % would be .70 to 1.10 per subscriber bill.

The Selectmen have authorized Bill Hewig to negotiate with Comcast.

Points of Negotiation.

Nancy Richard of PAC-TV would like to see an increase from 3% to 5%. This would give us a third access Channel. We could get a Capital Grant. There are two types; Annual operating expenses or equipment. There was a short discussion. The Sewer Dept and Transfer Station do not receive cable. Remote Line feed. Need to upgrade equipment?

We need to document the current system and survey the townspeople. Ed B will talk with Shelley Loring in Town Clerk's office re: survey on the webpage. A survey should include asking the citizenry what amount of increase they would be willing to pay for improved access.

Bill H will resend examples of simple surveys to Kevin.

Customer service and repair service is negotiable. What is the response time to inquiries? Compliance issues? What's the repercussions? Research on compliance with the license. Signal Quality? Service Quality?

What is the role of this committee?

Enforcement and Compliance.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday January 23, 2007 at 6 PM at the Town House in Room 201.

Ed will take the info to Town Clerk to have the meeting posted.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Bob Pinato and seconded by Ed Bielecki. The Motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 11:10 am.

Respectfully submitted,

Ed Bielecki
Secretary

Approved at 1/23/07 Mtg