



The City of

WORCESTER

CABLE TELEVISION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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Meeting Minutes

Cable Television Advisory Committee PUBLIC HEARING and Regular Meeting Howland Room, 3rd Floor, City Hall 455 Main St., Worcester, MA November 9, 2022 – 6:00pm Approved January 11, 2023

The meeting will be held in person, but you may choose to participate remotely. Remote participation is through WebEx:

To join meeting online using WebEx platform:

- ❖ go to www.webex.com
- ❖ click the "join" button on the top right side of the screen
- ❖ enter the meeting ID, 160 794 8474

To attend via phone:

- ❖ call 1-415-655-0001
- ❖ enter the access code: 160 794 8474

1. Call meeting to order

6:00pm

- a. Welcome new member: Phillip Lwasa, District 3

2. Roll Call

Present: Sergio Bacelis, Phillip Lwasa, John Keough, Steve Quist, Jeff Levering; Judith Warren (Director, Cable Services)

3. Approval of minutes from October 5, 2022

Moved Levering; Seconded Quist; Roll Call (5 Yes, 0 No)

4. Survey Update (Esther Campbell, ETC)

Campbell: Over 400 completed surveys have been collected so far. Next steps are data tabulation and report assembly.

5. PUBLIC HEARING re: Cable Television Services provided by Charter/Spectrum

Cheryl Rosen (Worcester): Over a month of back and forth with Spectrum, regarding cable box issues and missing channels; After initial attempt to resolve, case was closed without resolution; Customer reached out again and case was reopened and some improvement has been made but some issues persisted. Additionally, customer's attempt to return unwanted cable box was initially denied, then required City Councilor intervention to be resolved. "Their service is bad, they're not doing what they're supposed to be doing." Also mentioned quality issues with video signal in a later comment.

Michael Coogan (Worcester): Returned a cable box but is still being billed monthly for it. In a later comment stated that survey response rates might be higher if they were addressed to specific individuals and not "occupant."

Matthew Corey (Worcester): WCCA member/producer. Requested that adequate funding be given to public access television station in upcoming contract.

Jack Peacock (Worcester): WCCA member/producer. Requested that proper/increased funding be given to public access television station in upcoming contract to cover operation costs, capital improvements, and appropriate staffing levels. Stated that funding based on television subscriptions alone is unfair and that internet subscriptions should also be a source of funds. In a later comment brought attention to Charter shifting revenue by encouraging customers to change to web-based services.

Bill Coleman (Worcester): WCCA member/producer. Advocated for Worcester programming to be made available regionally. Also mentioned that WCCA could use additional funding

Amy Curry (Worcester): Has experienced bill increases without prior notification. Also has experienced issues with streaming service failing to load content. Senior option for channels has been removed, again without notification to customer. Asked if there was a way to have competition within city for cable provider.

Mark Sbazlian (Worcester): Inquired if there is an expectation of service options for those on fixed incomes, such as seniors. Levering: There is currently interest, but last negotiation this was something that the city was unable to achieve.

Sandra Sterling (Worcester): Works from home and experiences slow internet speeds when

using multiple devices. Finds lack of competition for internet/cable problematic, and does not feel like Charter service is comparable to other providers.

John Finn (Worcester): Said that cable rates continue to rise, and that Worcester needs set rates (especially for seniors, those with disabilities, etc). Was offered channels at a specific price, but when he received his bill the price was dramatically higher due to additional undisclosed fees. Expressed need for Charter to be honest about the pricing of their services. Dropped Charter, ultimately.

Mauro DePasquale (Worcester): WCCA Director. Expressed need for additional funding to meet needs of their members and to maintain the building. Discussed desire for Worcester PEG content to be available regionally to cable subscribers.

Keough: Encouraged public to submit comments to City Council, in addition to CTAC, and to encourage more community members to participate in this process.

Bacelis: Encouraged viewers to share meeting recordings with other members of the public to foster participation.

Pat Digone (Worcester): Has a second home (in Maine) that also is served by Charter/Spectrum, and finds the rates and customer service outside of Worcester far better. Frustrated by lack of competition in Worcester which allows them to continually raise rates.

6. Ascertainment Consultant Update (Warren)

Sue Buske: President, Buske Group, working with committee, and public on ascertainment process. Will inform public on process, and get information from public on what is desired in new franchise. Also will audit current franchise for contract compliance. Renewal involves analysis of past franchise compliance and planning for current/future needs; this information will be provided to the community

Keough: Asked if comparisons between communities is involved in compliance audit/ascertainment. Buske: Compliance audit only involves city's specific contract, strictly speaking, but information from other communities can be used to inform negotiations.

7. Status/Review/Modify Updated Timeline (Levering)

Levering: Goal is for final ascertainment report to be submitted in April, but it is likely that it will be as late as June. This still allows time for negotiations, and if necessary license can be extended to

allow more time for this process.

Quist: PEG channels are to submit final reports by April or May.

8. Contract Comparison Review Update (Keough)

Keough: Report to be presented at December meeting.

9. Spectrum Franchise Fee Increase, History (Warren)

Warren: Discussed lack of communication from Charter with Law Dept, and was advised on how to submit formal written communication. Law Dept will work with Warren on documentation and communication, which will be sent later in the week.

10. Board member expirations

Bacelis: Would like to stay on board through the renewal process, beyond December when seat officially expires.

Levering: Plans to step down as chair as of December 31, but is willing to extend term by up to six months in the interest of maintaining quorum. No plans to renew seat.

Keough: Expressed appreciation for Levering's work as chairperson and would like him to extend his term by the six months as stated.

Quist, Lwasa, Bacelis: Expressed agreement

Warren: Officially, Levering and Bacelis will be reappointed for a three-year term, but may step down at any time during term. No vote necessary until a new chair is to be chosen.

11. Next Meeting – December 7, 6:00pm

Confirmed

12. Adjournment

Moved: Levering; Seconded: Quist; Roll Call (5 Yes, 0 No)

Adjourned 7:32pm